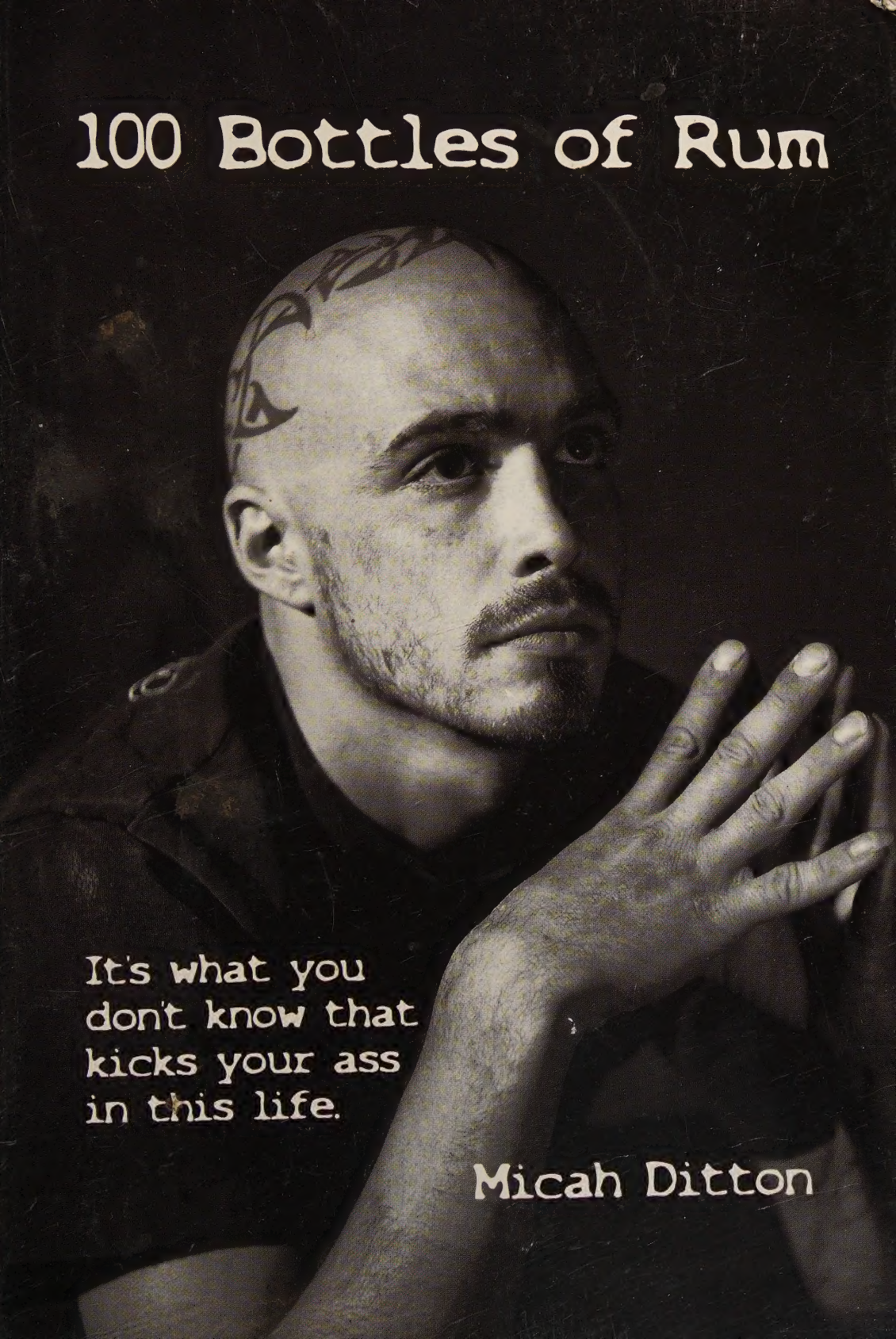
# 100 Bottles of Rum



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Micah Ditton

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For everyone actively seeking their puzzle pieces

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# 1

12-9-12 Cuenca, Ecuador. 10:00 am

I woke up fuzzy. At 9:00 am. That might as well be noon for me. After living in a remote reserve in a cloud forest in Ecuador, it might as well be tomorrow. I hadn´t been bar hopping since September and it´s probably just as well. I still got the giggles. The only shiny spots in Cuenca are the strong bland microbrews that go down way too easy. The local beer is nearly impossible to get drunk on.

I found a German owned bar after the microbrewery. The place had a huge selection of music, something like 40,000 songs. The metal selection was an unexpected treat. The bar only seats maybe fifteen people, but last night there were only five, including the owner. So there I was, an American, with two locals and two Germans. One local guy spoke decent English, the other only Spanish, my Spanish is OK, the owner of the bar spoke German, English and Spanish and the other German guy... well, he only spoke German. He had just moved to Ecuador three days earlier with his wife who had taken a job there. Within an hour we were all friends and decided to go bar hopping. The bar owner had to work, so it was the four of us... already buzzed... language impaired and laughing at the ridiculousness of it all. The German guy, Tom, and I drank the locals under the table and continued on our search for fun. Somewhere along the way I heard Americans asking a local guy why he chose German... Alas, a chance to communicate with Tom after four hours of trying to figure out any words we had in common, which were few. Somehow my chance got lost to an opportunity to re-pierce a girl's nose. Turned out they had been trying to get the hole back open for hours and I said... "What you need is someone who doesn´t give a shit... and that would be me." The girl said she just wanted it over with and I said I was sick of hearing about it. She invited me to try. I washed my hands and prepared for the operation. At first I wasn´t sure I could get a good enough grip to force it through, because her nose was so greasy. Then, with a redoubled effort, and a crunch, it was done. We ended up closing the bar down with them. Tom and I closed two more bars before we went our own ways and I found myself stumbling to my hostel.

At my dorm I got invited to smoke some pot. The next hour is a bit fuzzy, but I seem to remember a Brit and an Aussie kid waiting for their friend to return with food and Valium. We smoked one joint and were talking story when the subject of machetes came up. I happened to have one. We were inspecting my super sharp, super rusty machete when the other Aussie came back. At that point the first Aussie kid was not looking so well. The other guys were wondering what kind of maniac they were partying with. Then I woke up and there was a third guy in our four bed dorm. He must have come in after 4:00 am because that's the last time I remember.

Three months ago I arrived at Reserva Las Tangaras with my wife and our almost three year old son. We had been traveling for two months together. We flew from Hawaii to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. We bused down through Central America and then we flew to Ecuador. We took a volunteer job at a hike in reserve in Mindo. It turned into a five month working vacation. Living in Hawaii at the time, earning good money, we decided to apply for a position managing Reserva Las Tangaras for three months. The reserve had been an idea since Jaime was pregnant with our son Never. She had found an ad for volunteer managers at a research station in the cloud forest in Mindo, Ecuador. It's a small town geared toward tourism. The reserve needed work I could do and Jaime's biology back-ground made us perfect candidates. We applied, got the job and had six months to figure it out. The reserve is a two kilometer hike from the road and one of the coolest places I have ever had the pleasure to live. My duties included maintaining the trails, repairing the problematic waterline, rebuilding the suspension bridge and guiding and setting up tourists that visit the reserve. While I have experience cooking in restaurants, this was my first stint as an inn keeper. It turned out to be something I am good at and enjoy. I got invited to come back next year for another tour.

After living there for three months I feel normal with a machete at my side. It seems, from my point of view anyway, a lot of tourists are a bit unnerved by a gringo with a well-used machete. I don´t usually wear it on my hip in cities, but it is usually near at hand. I have never been a fan of cities or civilization. The reserve was a perfect place for me. The day started early... usually at dawn, sometimes before. After a hearty breakfast it's off

into the cloud forest to maintain the trails or work on one of the many projects going on or to guide tourists in search of birds, animals or waterfalls. I usually returned to the lodge after lunch and tackled another project or two. Twice a week we hiked to town for supplies. With a two year old, the main load ended up on my back.

When I arrived at the reserve I was all upper body strength. Living in Hawaii and surfing down the Pacific kept my shoulders strong and large, but I had a bit of a beer gut. Now three months later I am ready for Fight Club. My arms are lean and sinuous, my core is tight and my legs are strong. Aside from my smaller arms and shoulders, I am in the best shape I´ve been in ten years. Now as I make my way down through the Andes I feel my conditioning will serve me well. My pack is heavy with camping gear, but it gets easier every day. The Andean highlands are a far cry from the cloud forest where it is forever springtime. Now I am grateful for my poncho and the warm clothes. My best friends are a sturdy pair of hiking boots, which are some of the most comfortable I have owned. I have a good backpack. It´s a bit heavy and big enough to get over loaded easily. It has seen its share of heavy loads and is one with my body.

A few days ago I put my family on a plane back for the States. It was one of the sadder moments in my life. It is strange to wake up alone, without a little kid jumping on me, begging for breakfast. I hope I find whatever it is I am lacking. The cost of abandoning my three year old son seems, at the moment, necessary for me to find some peace in this life. I have had many moments of doubt in myself and my motivations, but the memories of restlessness and frustration compel me to keep up the search. Searching seems to be the theme of my life. I am not even sure there is anything to find. But the search... I must continue till I absolutely can´t go on. I have been lucky to have lived a life of adventure mixed with times of domestic sedation. The daily grind in the States is just something I can bear no longer.

When I was a young adult my search was confined to my mind. I've always liked reading and could get lost in a good book for weeks. The stories of adventure and exotic places never seemed real. But I had my mind and it is a vast place. During my summers off of school I would travel between California, Oregon and Washington visiting family and friends. There was no shortage of interesting people or places and the road was forever calling

me. When you're a teenager it seems the people we need to find are always just down the road. One only needs to look... down the road. I feel one of the main problems within society is the fear of the unknown. This fear allows people to forgo the big questions, the lack of need for solutions is, in the end, resignation to a life barely lived. I fear the unknown will remain unknown. I live for the big questions.

In my travels through the States and in my mind, with the use of hallucinogens, I have developed a working philosophy for my life and formulated theories that I have tested over the years. Some I´ve abandoned, and some I´ve embraced. A few in particular have been the basis for my life view. Puzzle pieces, or the lack there of, have been on my mind since I was twelve. It all started with Dune. He lived across a field from us and was our only neighbor. He was also the only other guy with long hair at our school. I was in grade school and he was in high school. But our similarities were such that I got to spend some time with him. In my mind, he was Mr. Cool. He did what he wanted and no one hassled him. For me it was nothing but hassles. Over time I tried to isolate what made him so cool. I guess there were a lot of things, but I only needed one. I think the fact that he was always in a good mood mystified me. The way he cut against the grain like butter became the focus of my study. I guess now that I think about it, what I got from him was the idea of always keep them guessing. Stay one step ahead. Disturb their delusions passively by just being impossible to miss. That was my first puzzle piece, but it took years to find its place before transforming me forever.

While pondering the difficulties with finding ones place in this world I found the puzzle piece theory. It has guided me for around twenty five years. I see each life as a giant puzzle, each unique and incomplete. When we are born we come with a mental box of puzzle pieces. The box is blank so we have no idea what the puzzle looks like. The main problem is that maybe only half the pieces belong to your puzzle. The others belong to other people scattered throughout humanity. That is also where you can find your other pieces. I suppose there is a lot of variation in difficulties and the quantity of pieces. Furthermore, I guess some people even start with more or less pieces that belong to them. Hell, maybe a really easy puzzle only has twenty five pieces and you start with twenty of your own. Maybe with little effort you can find your place in this world. Yet, for others... the task is

staggeringly ridiculous. The object of life is to trade pieces in hopes of catching a glimpse of the meaning of your life. Many people gave up on the puzzle years ago and many more don´t know they are a puzzle. Well, now you know. Most people can´t or won´t travel, so it is the task of the few to keep the pieces moving around the board. A lot of people hitchhike on the few. Like inoculations... in the States you can get by without them because everyone else has them... except opposite. The masses depend on the few to push knowledge further. Then there are the people that are driven to search. The more they search the more life makes sense and soon the search is all that is left. The currency is ideas.

One of the hardest problems is that pieces are rarely exchanged in a momentary casual conversation. Two or more people must be interested and attracted to one another to have a deep enough discourse to really help each other. In this light it seems to me, a reason why some people end up talking for days or years after what started out as a simple introduction. Part of me thinks we have an internal compass that leads to people with answers. Another part of me thinks too many people don´t use their compasses. When we are attracted, whether emotionally, spiritually or physically, we need to have the time to get to information we can use. We need the desire to trade ideas in order to find clarity. It´s not as simple as you have my piece and I have yours... here you go, but that happens. It´s more of a situation where we collect more and more profound ideas for trade later, whether they fit your world view or not. It might go something like this... you talk with someone and feel like you have gained something... you're not sure what, but it´s there. Maybe the idea needed a new conductor to make it beyond where you found it. Now you have it and need to share it or maybe it just comes up randomly. But it is in the current and needs to keep moving, like a virus… adapting and evolving as it moves through the world… Another challenge is that there is a limited amount of space... i.e... the box. Sometimes we need to give before we can receive. If someone is not sharing they might miss an opportunity to gain a pivotal piece that may never come around again. It could be that piece that connected a whole mess of pieces already possessed.

This philosophy has led me to forever give and help others find their pieces, while creating room for myself. Everyone has had those eureka moments when something just clicks into place... a thought, as simple as it

may be, can forever alter the course of life for everyone on the planet. We just need to get the idea into the right hands. Some people have no desire for clarity and this is a shame because so many people need the ideas they possess. I believe this is one of the great human tragedies, that so many people hold the answers for so many others, without even knowing it. At other times stereotypes keep us from reaching out. In another vein, some people are so hung up on an idea that they horde the pieces, sometimes on purpose, sometimes unknowingly. To me this is underlying theme to the theory... the task of reaching so many sleeping people seems impossible. There are so many world views and so many differences it is like trying to swim up a river, while others are just floating down. Contentment is a virus to explanation.

I was very lucky to have, at a young age, met some very committed people that were hungry for ideas... no, they were starving. Once I found the puzzle piece theory, it made so much sense to find people to talk to in hopes of finding some clarity. It is all of our differences that allow us to learn from each other. The further you search, the greater the distance, the greater the opportunity to exchange more profound ideas. After twenty five years on this train of thought, of aggressive puzzle piece trading, it seems I give more then I receive. But then again, I´ve been wrong a lot. I do find some gems every so often. Over the years I have had times where I was just too occupied or content to trade with vigor. But someone, somewhere, perhaps by their shear lack of desire to advance, reminded me that the search must go on. It must go on if there is ever to be any peace in my overactive mind.

At the moment I am sitting on a bus in the Andes trying to get from Ecuador to Peru before my visa expires at midnight. No one mentioned that the road is only open for three different hours a day. Needless to say, this is not our hour. With four hours to wait I decided to put pen to paper to share something I truly believe, rather than engage my fellow travelers. It's a small sacrifice to try to reach the masses. While writing I have reminded myself of the urgency I felt as a young man and rekindled the desire to solve my puzzle. I have no delusion that this is improbable in a single life time. This does not diminish the happiness I feel when I find a little more clarity.

We all like the comfort we find in friendship and have a tendency to become part of a group of likeminded people. But in time, without expansion, these groups lead to stagnation and we unknowingly help each

other become complacent. For some people comfort is all that matters, to hell with this searching shit. For some others, all they have is the search, the stories and the friendships they create along the way. People will come and go throughout our lives, but everyone will leave a little piece. All we need to do is be cognate of this fact and start a collection. Someday, we might wake up and realize this is life... a living, breathing and always evolving thing that needs nurturing and shelter to grow into something worth sharing... something worth talking about... maybe something worth writing a book about...

Note: Due to the vast number of crazy names in this book I have added an Index of reoccurring characters at the end. I hope it helps.

# Part I: Rites of Passage

## 2

I was born in Seattle, Washington at 11:58am on August 3rd, 1973. I am the third son from my mom and the first of four from my dad. I must admit I don´t remember much about my early childhood. My memories start at about eleven or twelve years old. This is probably due to smoking pot and huffing gasoline around that time. Most of what I do know is from the stories I was told. My father was a disabled Vietnam Veteran and my mother suffers from extreme manic depression. From what my oldest brother told me, it was very difficult growing up with my mom through four stepfathers, in as many States, not knowing his real father till he was in his thirties. My older brothers have different fathers and both consider mine their dad. I guess my dad met my mom while he was on furlough from prison. Like the others he was madly in love with her and in fact, he married her twice. During the first divorce I can remember visiting my mom at her Filipino boyfriends' house. I remember the frosted glass lamp shade with the naked ladies and the spider-man tooth brush his family gave me for Christmas. I suppose she lacked self-control. My dad stuck with her for years. My mom finally left my dad when I was six years old. My memory, real or imagined, is of me standing on the front porch with my dad, while my mom and brothers loaded up the station wagon to go to California. I remember their stuff packed in the back floorboards to make a bed. My oldest brother helped drive and they went straight through the night.

I guess I was given the choice to stay or go. There was just no way I could leave my dad in his depths of sorrow. I felt that if I left it would crush him. What followed is a blurry set of patchy memories. I´m not really sure what happened in what order and in fact this jog down memory lane

expanded the knowledge I have about my childhood. At some point my dad and I ended up living in a basement flat in Puyallup, Washington with the younger sister of close family friends. While I grew up with this family, camping and going to the lake, the only things I remember are the garage full of stolen bike parts and insane abuse in the home. The father, a very good friend of my dad, was a complete lunatic and tormented his family regularly. The only solid memory I have of him is from a night I stayed over. That night he came home drunk, abused the kids, then his wife and then smashed up the house. He never touched me, owing to the fact that my dad was nearly 6´4" and would have ripped his head off. Needless to say that was the only night I stayed over.

So there we were in this basement living with my dad's girlfriend, Vicki. Vicki is also the mother to my only sister. These times are some of the blurriest in my childhood. I do have some clear memories though. Vicki had a two year old son, "Bean" whom I consider my little brother, though we´ve barely stay in touch throughout the years. I only remember food banks, binge drinking, insane biker parties and my dad in and out of the hospital getting surgeries on his foot. His foot was a constant source of pain for most of my dad's life. The story goes something like this...

My dad was raised, for the first part of his childhood, by a psychotic marine affectionately known as Berger. My dad being the oldest of five children received the brunt of his abuses. One day on the playground my dad stepped on a nail that went through his heel-bone. Afraid to say anything and receiving no care for it, it became a problem during his second tour in Vietnam and unbearable during his third. When he got home he was operated on by interns and a piece of bone was left to rot... and it did just that. In around half a dozen surgeries the doctors removed more and more of his heel until it was a gnarly mass of scar tissue. Everything they did made it worse until over twenty years later he had it removed below the knee.

When my dad was a teenager he was in court for something and when they called his name he didn´t recognize it. He thought his last name was Berger. When he asked about it, they said his last name is Ditton. He was shocked and asked to be locked up. The second half of my dad's childhood was in juvenile correction facilities and foster homes. When he learned the army would take him at seventeen, he took the opportunity. Out of shear chance, decades later, I ended up with a house in Tangent, Oregon, twenty miles from where he signed up. And it also happens to be the place he died. He really liked his time in Oregon and it was a fitting place to end his journey.

Now back to the original story...

From the basement we moved to the country in Maple Valley, to a house with some property. My main memories are of the dog, Rufus, attacking me one day when I returned home from school and of parties that went on for weeks. At some point I remember this guy "Scab" running around in circles with a ball-pin hammer stuck in his skull. My memory of how this happened goes something like this...

At some point Scab became the campfire master. While everyone was gone or passed out he cut down a hundred year old tree for firewood. When he realized it wouldn´t burn he stoked the fire with car tires. This led to the fire department coming out to extinguish it. Something to note is that Scab had earned his nickname. Everyone said you could pick him off and he would come back. That guy just loved to get the crap kicked out of him... which usually happened. Anyway, one thing lead to another and "Crazy Randy" put the hammer in his head. Still not done, they had to beat him nearly to death and roll him into the roadside ditch. Later that evening the police showed up saying this guy had climbed up to a neighbor's porch nearly dead. He claimed he was accosted at our house, which was denied. After the beating, they rolled his Jeep down the huge hill in front of our house. It made it halfway down the hill before veering off the road into the woods. From there the kids went to work on it with the tools on hand... rocks, boots and a tire iron. After that we were kicked out of the house and I am not sure where we landed.

During this time my dad's main running partner was a full blood Muckleshoot Indian and you guessed it... his name was "Indian". Besides heavy drug and alcohol use, my only other memories are insane to say the least. Indian was, like my dad, completely insane and very dangerous. This man shot his dog for shitting in the house in front of his family. At some point they had this giant Cadillac with the top cut off. One day Indian, Bean and my dad were getting gas in the car. Across from them were two black guys on a Honda motorcycle. Bean, being the good little racist he was raised to be, exclaimed, "Look dad, two niggers on a rice-rocket". Seeing the situation for what it was, the two guys fled. The racists gave chase and ran them off the road. After a chase through the woods they found one of the guys. He had stopped to keep from shitting his pants. Apparently the situation was funny enough to call it a day. Could you imagine being chased down by a guy named "Sasquatch" with a racist three year old and a Native American biker? Despite being raised in an

extremely bigoted situation, neither my little brother nor I have any racially bigoted feelings.

Another story is of the times my dad went fishing in the non-traditional native fashion... with dynamite. The common method used was to tie rocks to the sticks... light them... sink them and collect the stunned fish. I guess one time the rock became untied and the stick floated to the top, blew up, rang their ears and nearly sunk the boat.

Being raised with my dad mostly, due to a hostile step father situation, was rough stuff. Him being an alcoholic, drug addict and a biker lent itself to no shortages of drugs being left lying around when the parties hit the coma phase. Besides pills and booze, there seemed to be on occasion LSD and Mushrooms. Being curious and having easy access, I don't remember the first time I tried psychedelics. Furthermore, living in the Pacific Northwest and having a liking for fungus, my friends and I would pick bread bags full of Shrooms in the fall and scatter them throughout the neighborhood freezers for later use. Needless to say I enjoyed the mental challenge of tripping as a kid and this stayed with me into my adulthood. But, there will be more on that later. For now it's back to my dad and the shaping of one life through years of chaos.

In the mid 80's my dad had a long bout with flashbacks from the Vietnam War. I, being the loyal son, stayed the course when everyone else had fled the nightmares. I remember two times in general that would help shape my worldview for the rest of my life. The first time my dad flipped out Vicki and the kids fled, but I refused to abandon him. The first things I remember are my dad being trapped in a hellish nightmare and me trying for hours to get through to him. He was sitting in a corner with his 30-06 hunting rifle babbling about VC and killed and wounded friends. I just remember crying and yelling at him for hours... "Dad, it's me, we're at home, come back, please come back." At one point I was staring down the barrel of that rifle, never considering that he would actually kill me. After hours of pleading he finally started to recognize me. I remember vividly the moments of recognition in his eyes and him asking me what I was doing there. I told him over and over again I was scared for him and couldn't leave him to this delusion, in not so cognate words. Eventually, long into the night he came back to reality and grabbed me, both of us crying, he apologized over and over again. I told him it wasn't his fault and eventually we fell asleep in each other's arms over that rifle. On a second, worse occasion, he actually shot up the house. There was an army of police outside and I couldn't leave for fear

the police would open fire. In the end I rode it out with my pops and afterwards he was checked into the VA hospital.

At some point soon thereafter my dad ended up back in prison on drug and gun charges and I was sent to live with my mom in the Mojave Desert in Southern California. While I had visited over the years, this was the first time I had to be there. To my misfortune, both my brothers were in the juvenile detention system and my step father assumed I was on the same path as them. My step father never had kids of his own and for good reason... he simply didn't like kids. So for me it was a constant battle with a guy that had no clue how to deal with kids. Furthermore, I was on drugs and alcohol and smoked cigarettes. I managed to conceal everything but the smell of the cigarettes and this had me in constant trouble. For my mother's part she was loving and nurturing, but had a severe mental disorder.

In the sixth grade I remember going to a private Christian school, while I didn't object to the school, the school had no idea what to do with a long hair biker brat. For me religion has always been an interest. I attended every church in my town, usually because there was a girl there I liked, but also because I found religion fascinating. Unlike the other kids that had to be there, I wanted to go. I'm not sure what it was at the time that attracted me. Later in my adult years I simply found it so ridiculous it was entertaining. In fact, on long road trips I would listen to the Christian Family Network for hours and just laugh my ass off, much to the dismay of my friends and girlfriends who had to sit through it. It was always such a crazy thing to hear the preacher claiming the woman's place was in the home and demons were battling for dominion of the youth. This rhetoric drove me into the arms of the dark side. While I never worshiped Satan, I loved anything they claimed was evil. I played Dungeons and Dragons and listened to Ozzy Osborne. In fact, I would listen for the next thing to be demonized so I could embrace it. Overall, I was a good kid. I didn't torture animals or anything like that. I wore black everything, grew my hair out and did drugs. Finding myself sitting in church was odd to say the least. But, I loved girls. I went to church to hang out with girls. And I found plenty of rebellious cuties. With the looseness of the biker community there was no lack of sexuality in my childhood. I suppose I had an advantage in church, more so than at school.

Eventually I fell in with a family of criminals that lived nearby and this lead to further degeneration. While they were robbing houses I would stand guard and at one point we stole a car with the idea of driving it to Washington with our girlfriends. We actually broke into this ladies house

while she was sleeping. We took the keys out of her purse and opened the garage door without waking her. The main problem was we didn't have gas money and ended up camping in the nearby riverbed until we decided it was pointless and just abandoned the car. My girlfriend at the time got sent to live with relatives and I never saw her again. She was pretty, smart and it was sad to see her go. I still think about her sometimes… I think about all of them I suppose.

In the first week of seventh grade I got caught selling pot to my buddy on the school bus and got kicked out of the district. This lead to getting kicked out of my house. Lucky for me, my dad had recently gotten out of prison and I was sent back to live with him. My step-dad and I were both glad for the thousand miles between us.

This is really complicated for me, but here it is. During this time the family friend and crazy dad, Danny, divorced from the wife and I guess my dad had a thing for her, because he promptly left the little sister, with two kids and married the older sister, Kathy. She is my second mom, mother of my two younger brothers and lifelong friend. So when I came back I was part of a new larger family with two stepbrothers who I had known my whole life. Kathy was a nurse and from here on life became a series of different town, new schools and endless problems for me. But for my new step-mom, I was another son and she treated me as such.

The last time I saw Kathy was at the reserve in Ecuador. We had committed for three months starting September 17th, 2012. We decided to start in Mexico and bought tickets with airline miles we had saved up. Two months later and a bit torn up we flew from Nicaragua to Quito. Jaime had just kicked a nasty parasite and I had a staph infection I got surfing in El Salvador. A doctor in Nicaragua said it was bursitis caused by stress, but when we got to Quito I was in bad shape. I found a cheap clinic and got a full diagnostics. I had a bad staph infection and high cholesterol. I took a cycle of antibiotics while I was waiting for my test results and we headed to the reserve. A few days later, my condition still getting worse, I returned to Quito and the doctor at the clinic realized I had a huge abscess in my elbow. He sent me to the military hospital and after six hours I got them to drain the abscess. My Spanish is OK, but medical terms are a different thing entirely. I was lost, sick and couldn't speak plainly. Lucky for me they had two interns that spoke good English and they sped the process up. Then I befriended a kid with a broken arm and it turned out his dad was some high up military guy. He spoke English and asked me what was going on. I was a gringo in a military hospital after all. I gave him a short version and he

walked off to talk to someone. Ten minutes later I had every doctor in the hospital fussing over my arm. I was out of there thirty minutes later. I returned to the reserve and my condition improved every day. At the reserve I soon found a groove and three months was just not enough time.

## 3

The reserve is simply incredible. The usually crystal clear Nambillo River flows beneath the lodge. There are beautiful creeks on both sides of the reserve. The property of the reserve climbs a mountain up into the Nambillo Protector, a rugged mostly inaccessible cloud forest. It's a jungle, but it's still a forest much like the States. I have spent so much of my life in the woods. It's a complimentary opposite to the beach life of Oahu and Central America. The clouds barely let up. They drift through the trees... they are the breath of the trees. Your clothes are never truly dry. Electronics fail and rain is always on hand. The temperature is perfect, never getting below fifty or above eighty. It's always spring. On the walk in or out is the only time you really get direct sunlight. The reserve is a forest, but across the river is an old pasture with bushes, but no shade. You know you are at zero degrees of latitude the moment the sun hits you.

The animals are the same characters in different costumes. Except for the jaguar... That is a different animal. Hundreds of pounds of meat eating cat are intimidating to say the least. The birds are more exotic, Toucans, Parrots, Cuckoos and Mot-mots. There are nearly three hundred recorded species at the reserve alone. There are twenty species of hummingbird and growing. The main attraction was the Andean Cock of the Rock. There are a mess of them at the top of the reserve. I never imagined there were that many different color schemes. There are more crazy bugs and butterflies than I can count. There were downsides though. Everything had to be hauled in on horseback, by unreliable cowboys who want to screw gringos at every chance. There was no electricity, except a gas generator that disrupts the peace. And the worst part is the relentless mosquitoes. It was a three month battle trying to keep them off a two year old. The first day at the reserve we didn´t understand, but when your kid wakes up crying, pleading for you to make the itching stop, you understand. In November, Never turned three and we celebrated with the gypsy friends we made in town. Nojue (No way), the son of my closest friend there, Diego, was one

day older then Nev, so we joined their party. A group of people from all over the world seemed like a cool third birthday party to me.

I had been trying to get Kathy to come to Ecuador since before we got there. Eventually, she made in the end of November, near the end of our term. Kat is one of two people to take advantage of where I have lived. She visited us in Hawaii and then she came to Ecuador. She only had a week and we gave her the crash course in Andean Ecuador. For Jaime's birthday she wanted to visit the famous market in Otavalo, but it was a logistical problem. When Kat arrived it worked out that Jaime went to Quito to meet her and then they went to Otavalo. Nev and I ran the reserve and worked on projects we needed to finish before we left. In Otavalo, Kat bought me the coolest hand carved wooden mask. It has a smooth oval face with three sets of horn integrated into it. It is called mythos. The story is that it's the face of a great warrior after he dies and becomes a deity. It is the coolest mask in my collection and an awesome addition to my other masks from Mexico, Central, Hawaii and Colombia.

The mask collecting started in around 2007. After my dad died and left us some money, I took my share and Jaime's beat down 96 Honda Civic as far south as possible. She bought the car new right before we got together. 250,000 miles of touring through the Western States, Canadian Rockies and multiple trips to Baja, it still ran strong. She wanted to trade it in for a CVR, but I asked her to wait a bit and see if I could buy it off her. She thought that was dumb, but went for it. She knew how much I loved that car. Well, less than a week later, while taking my dog to the river for a swim, a big ass limb fell on it and smashed in the roof and trunk. The insurance company gave her more for it totaled then she could have gotten for the trade in. Destiny called me and that car south. It was a month into the trip, in Puerto Escondido, Mexico, that I saw the first mask on the sidewalk. I negotiated for three days before we settled on the price. From then on I have searched for finely hand carved wooden masks. Unfortunately, the trip ended in Guatemala when I got a knarly case of Scabies. I tried for weeks to get rid of them, using Raid bombs in the car, taking pills and using rancid chemicals on my skin. When I started seeing other people I traveled with getting them, I called the trip off. The only cure for the little bastards was the dry air of the Baja. That trip was also the first time, aside from a trip to Oahu when I was twelve, that I'd surfed warm water. You see, I learned to surf in the frigid waters of Northern California near the Oregon border. Baja seemed warm at sixty degrees. The freedom from a wetsuit and the way the water moved differently... faster, more

energetic, was polar opposite to the lethargic waters of the North Coast. Not to say that the cold water was weaker, it takes more power to move cold water, the tropics just seemed more like a playground than something to suffer through.

After three months in the jungle without surfing or even seeing the ocean, I didn't really miss it. I was in the hills and it felt good. The place was thriving and I just wanted to share it. Kat took me up on the offer and it is a good feeling, knowing she got to see it, share it and be part of it. I wish more people would take advantage of my location. I have lived in some awesome spots. The reserve is one of my favorites.

The upstairs of the lodge only has a half wall, so the sounds of the jungle and river flowed into our indoor tent. The sounds of the creatures of the night were overwhelming at times. After a time I had moments where I could really hear past the few dominant species and hear the different sounds. It's a crazy mass of chirping till you filter out the main players, then it's more like an orchestra in concert. There are uncountable frogs and bugs calling out in search of each other. Yet, the many, the same vastly outnumber the others.

The main thing I remember about Kat was her no bullshit view on life. A long time student of Thai chi, RN in a psyche-ward and mother to many, you could always count on her to call it straight. She worked her ass off to raise a bunch of kids and while she was gone we ran amuck. Countless crimes and shenanigans... did I just say that? It's amazing we survived childhood. I think we lived in Bonney Lake first, at the scene of the abusive father. Then I think we moved to Aberdeen, because I can remember us kids sleeping on air mattresses on top of boxes of our shit. I must have gone back to California, because next I remember is Eastern Washington, but don't remember moving. It seems we might have moved to the Colville area, because I remember my dad driving Kat over the mountains to a new job. When you move as much as I have, nothing is for sure. Some of this is just writing hoping the order will sort itself out, and to some point it has helped jog my memories into place. Then I remember Lime Lake, the scene of Dune and the puzzle piece theory. And what a cool place that was. It was near Sullivan Lake, Washington. It was a bit out in the sticks, but then, everything there was a bit out. Lime Lake was a spring in a limestone bed that had been collapsing for who knows how long. The bottom was lime green and the water was crystal clear. Once we lowered a desk down the center to see how deep it was... we used all the fishing line we had and still

we watched it drop for what seemed like minutes. As kids we would row the boat around till we saw a fish, then lower the bait down and presto... dinner. I think we fished the lake out in a few years because after a while all I remember were Tinch... a kind of sucker fish.

After Lime Lake we moved to Ione. We lived in a house next to a restaurant, owned by our landlord. It wasn't long before three bored kids had found a way into the restaurant after it closed. We started out stealing cigarettes. After a while we were eating ice cream cones and robbing the change from the video games. All that came to an end when they installed an alarm. It went off one night we were trying to break in. This petty crime soon became a pattern. We had found an awesome house on acreage, out of town near the Canadian border. We were in bliss for a few months. Then the landlord went out of town. He had this giant fish pond stocked with rainbow trout. Busloads of tourist would stop and pay to catch the giant fish. While the landlord was on vacation, a few friends and I went and caught some fish. It wasn't long before a bunch of kids went back and pillaged the pond. They broke open the gate that kept the fish in, releasing most of the guys fish. Everyone knew it was us. But no one could prove it, so we agreed to lie to the bitter end. After about a week of this, my dad found a net made from my Pop Warner football practice jersey. I had forgotten I dropped it in a bush when we came home to find my dad there unexpectedly. In the homemade net was a can of the landlord's fish food. We never did rat out all the other kids, but that didn't protect me from the fallout at home.

It was my fault… mostly. My older step brother got a pass and went to stay with a friend of the family. I spent the rest of the time in that house locked in my bedroom. I used to sneak out at night until they figured that out. Then my window was nailed shut. The crime eventually led to us getting kicked out of the house. I was supposed to go to juvenile hall so my family could stay in the house. The small town had turned on us. We landed at my dad's friend. We managed to fuck that place up too. There was a grow operation and when it got ripped off everything pointed to us. I was nothing but a liar in my dad's eyes, so I had no chance of shedding the blame. Years later it came out that it wasn't me that had told everyone. I guess that was some validation. No matter what I was still responsible for ruining all the good things that had come our way. My life was hell for the next while. Two drunk vets, completely pissed off, I became the whipping boy. When they would come home drunk I would get roused out of bed and set in front of an inquisition. There was nothing they wanted from me more

than to vent their anger. While I understand why they were pissed, they took their anger out on an eleven year old kid. My memories of this are still vivid. They took the thing way too far. But I lived through it and their point stuck with me the rest of my life.

# 4

**It's just life...**

Kinda an oxymoron, but life should not be taken lightly. Nor should it be wasted. I've never felt so alive as when I was in the grips of death. I'm not sure who said that, but I say it. Where do we go from here? That is my question. Before we go numb is there something to break the slumber? I have always been thankful for cities; they keep the forests a place for solitude. Also places where, if you can let go for a bit, you can taste the balance. You don't have to cook on a wood fire or hunt for food. Just have the desire to be outside, outside of cities, the race and the insanity. In nature you can breathe clean air and see the stars away from the light pollution. Deserts are great places to see the stars. They just look bigger, brighter and you can gaze into the galaxy and see satellites spinning around the earth. Or you can watch Dancing with the Stars or whatever other time waster you can find, all the while getting lazier and more disconnected. In nature time slows down. The day just seems to last longer. The first day in the bush, away from roads, away from the race will be for adjustment. Adjustments in time. The plants grow so slow, the rapid wing beat of a bird is a moment in comparison. The second day, you realize your only significance is the marks you leave behind, yet still only temporary. The third week you can hear the different layers of bugs, birds and plants going about life, the rustle of the wind or a plant simply stretching out with growth. Find the sun... Find the sun indeed. Drenched at the beach, blasted in the desert, seared at high altitude and slivers in the rain forest. I guess my point is that life is fleeting, priceless and you can't go back. So many people spend their adult lives chasing, unable to see the forest through the trees.

For a lot of people the great outdoors is an amusement park with toilets and electricity, signs and explanations. But hey, it's outside. A lot of the most rugged scenic beauty has been civilized, made accessible and sanitary… Out of necessity to preserve it. A lack of trails will turn into too many trails. We need signs, trails, toilets and fences to show us how to visit a

wilderness without causing havoc. This is not true for everyone obviously, but enough people are guilty to spread the blame around. I include myself. There is a hot spring near where I grew up. The natives used it for centuries, but you wouldn't have known it. They respected the land and were part of it. The only signs of use were smooth rocks worn down by bare skin. I had heard stories about the 70's when hundreds of people were living there. Consider it's a two mile hike, downhill, to the Springs. They say the trash pile was so big they needed helicopters to haul it away. We need rules to keep people from destroying the things they love. Today hot springs are cleaned by locals, but the scars on the trees and the paint on the rocks take years to erase. The damage happens faster than nature can recover. Every careless act people have done diminished the natural state. People replant the chopped down trees, haul out the garbage and nature does its part, re-growing, covering, moving and uncovering. The birds sing and the sun shines.

If people understood nature better, were educated in its vulnerabilities, conscious of the footprints left behind, we wouldn't need to civilize the wilderness at all. My thing is I love hot springs. In my travels far and wide, always looking for them, I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly. All the problems are from ignorance and a lack of respect. A simple inability of civilization to impart sympathy. Nature is to be controlled and conquered. It hurts me to see the blatant lack of appreciation for our planet. After years of travel in Latin America I guess I am callused over. It sucks to see the destruction and garbage all around me, but not enough to do more than casual commentary. But, here and now I ask, please pick up some trash once in a while.

There is a beach somewhere completely free of people. Whatever you envision as an ideal scene is out there somewhere. Palm trees, redwoods, white sand, black sand, no sand, majestic rocks and more than we can wrap our heads around. As a recovering surf bum I am continually amazed at the diversity of scenery and wildlife. In search of waves I have spent a large chunk of life sitting on the beach drinking beer, trying not to get burnt to a crisp, just watching the waves roll in. After a few months in the same spot I end up barefoot and grizzly. No matter how feral I became, my love for the ocean remained the same. It's an unshakable desire to be near it, to smell it, to be in it, part of it. Too many people are apart from the ocean. The connection that accompanies respect for it is just non-existent. They just don't have a connection to it. On this earth the ocean is one of the things the entire planet shares. The sheer size of it gives us the

illusion of invincibility. Everything ends up in the ocean... everything. It's kind of scary really. The solution to pollution is dilution. But it can only take so much. When you love something you protect it.

Latin America is trashed. People throw garbage out the bus window like someone will pick it up, right in front of a sign asking you not to. They dump truckloads of trash on the side of the road outside of town, on the windward side of town and a bunch of it just blows back. At least most littering Americans will throw trash in a creek or off a cliff so it's out of view. When I was a kid my dad used to collect garbage. First, it was in a broke down van, till the bears started to tear the doors off it. The next time it was the garage. A two car garage filled over head with household trash. The feral cat population had soared and soon the garden was a litter box for hundreds of cats. They dug up our plants and the soil became toxic. I remember people wondering why there were so many cats. Someone should do something. Well, eventually we moved and had to clean the place. For a whole weekend we took load after load to the dump. It's ridiculous. It's the same mentality to put it on the roadside, all the while sweeping your sidewalk, then taking that trash out of town.

Eventually, everything ends up in the ocean, unless you bury it, then it ends up in the groundwater. But at least it's contained. I believe eventually technology will save the day. We have the ability to burn trash for industrial uses. At some point we need to rethink the way we live. Without that, our beaches will continually bring in the garbage we don't even remember dropping. Example… In Honolulu, Hawaii one million people live on a tiny island. Most people live in cities and have garbage service, but when they go to the beach they just drop it in the wind. Every time I surf I collect a pocket full of candy wrappers. I was on a construction crew and most of the guys I worked with were locals. One day during lunch I commented on all the trash everywhere and one guy said, "fucking haoles", as to blame it on white people. But over the next few weeks I watched the area where we ate lunch become totally trashed, plants were destroyed and there were flies and ants everywhere. Finally, I pointed it out to them and they were like, it's only a small spot, haoles trash everything. My point was completely lost on them. In the end I guess it's just what kind of world you want to live in. To these guys cities were just big piles of trash with roads. Their individual actions were inconsequential, until there are a million of them. I just don't understand how you can just pass the blame with a good conscience. I don't think I can fix the world. I just want to help raise consciousness... maybe that's the same thing?

I truly believe that the problems we face as humans are fixable. If enough people believe something it becomes a real thing. I keep preaching we just have to believe and things will change. Right now too many people believe it is hopeless, so it is. When enough people believe something needs to change, desire will follow and then action. People say the world is getting worse. Damn JW's preaching the apocalypse and spreading fear without a basis in truth. If you look at history the world is far safer, people are healthier, live longer and wars have less casualties. In Roman times tens of thousands would die in one battle in one morning. Not a pretty death either, being hacked apart by a sword or pummeled a club. Cities would be sacked and burned to the ground, the populations raped and taken for slaves. This was an everyday occurrence. Sure this still happens, but on a much smaller scale. When you live like the world is going to end you don't protect the future. When the world doesn't end we are left with a mess. Trash on the beach is insignificant to the industrial pollution being pumped into the air, rivers and earth. I guess I just don't understand greed. How much is enough? At what cost? When there is money to be made with solutions, they will become important. At the moment the power structure needs ignorance to get away with their crimes, so education suffers. The rich can afford private schools. The public system gets worse all the time. The prison system educates the poor these days. A lot of parents are too busy feeding their families to take a part in their children's' education. As a result kids have no respect for it.

I am guilty of disrupting the education of all the classes I attended for years. I had no respect for authority, as was my family's way. This translated into disregard for the other people I affected. I think that for about five years I attended less than half of my classes. Having two little brothers at home and two working parents, it was acceptable for me to miss school so I could babysit. If I got kicked out of school even better. In what should have been my junior year I only had two driver's education units. I spent three years in the ninth grade before I woke up and took education seriously. I am not sure how I got out of Jr. High School. The school I attended was seventh, eighth and ninth grades. In my second year of ninth grade I was the oldest kid in school, a bully and a trouble maker. The only thing I really had going for me was a good memory. Luckily, I could hear a lecture or read something and retrieve the information later with ease. I always got slack in school because I was quick and teachers could see my potential, even when I couldn´t. Then when they saw my SAT scores, they wanted to be the one to reach me, to help me.

When my mom divorced and was living alone I went back to California. My mom was on welfare and I either had to go to school or get a job. When I went to the high school to enroll they said, no way. It was the middle of the semester and because of my age I would be twenty when I graduated. Luckily the district had just started a continuation school for kids like me. Me being happy go lucky, I managed to skip the hundred kid waiting list. Everyone had forgotten that I was expelled from the district.

The first time I met Mr. Rickerl was during my first week of seventh grade. I got caught selling pot to a buddy on the bus. Mr. Rickerl was the Dean of Students and in charge of punishments. I was looking at going to Juvenile Hall, but managed to get them to let me move back with my dad. But, Mr. Rickerl being the asshole that he was at the time, told my step-dad a bunch of shit that wasn´t true. That I was a problem child on all manner of drugs and so on. This was perfect for my step-dad. He used the information to get me out of his life for good.

The next time I saw Mr. Rickerl he was principal of the new continuation school and had chilled out considerably. When I went to apply, they told me about the waiting list and said it would be a year before I could get in. The office was a tiny portable building, he was curious and came into the reception area. He heard my name. I am not sure how he recognized me, but he took me into his tiny office, looked at my patchy transcript and asked my one question, "Do you plan to sell drugs at my school?" Naturally I said no and with a handshake and a promise I was in school the next day. That was a promise I kept. I never sold drugs at school, only before and after school.

Halfway through my first year I traded some pot for a street bike and used to ride it to school. Before that my friend Wayne used to pick me up in his mini-truck in exchange for smoking everyone out before and after school. One day Mr. Rickerl was checking out my bike and asked me if I had filled out the proof of insurance form required to drive myself to school. I said "Of course, months ago." All the while I never even had a license to drive. It turned out that Mr. Rickerl and the school counselor, Mr. Grabes, rode motorcycles and invited me to go for a ride at lunch. This was my pass for the minor problems I caused. I got caught cheating and refused to give up the paper I was copying to protect my friend. I was given the chance to retake the test. I got kicked out of economics class permanently and they made me pick up trash during that period. In fact, that class was required for graduation, but me and the teacher bumped heads, so I spent the quarter on trash detail or in the office telling biker stories. Eventually the only class I

needed to graduate was economics. They let me study at home and attend the class to take the tests, which was the only way I was going to graduate. I finished four years of high school in less than two years. Largely thanks to my mom, typing out current events for extra credit. I signed up for the high school proficiency test and they said I just wanted out of class. I went to visit Mr. Grabes and when we looked at my progress I was on track to graduate that year. It was close and I had to do nearly double the work each quarter, but I been doing that the whole time. I blew through the test and during the composition section I made up a story similar to "Stand by Me", it was a hit and got passed throughout the school to teachers and students alike.

That was the first time I really let go and wrote a proper story. It opened a flood gate and I went on a poetry rampage for years, filling up folder after folder. Over the years I have collected hundreds of stories and have retold them over and over to countless people. Here I am in Peru twenty years later actually putting the pen to paper. Ya, it's just life, but it's been a curious trip and tons of people have been asking for a book. After graduation I had a month before the ceremony and spent the time pondering a hitchhiking adventure. I had never read "On the Road". I had only heard stories and met travelers, hobos and tramps. I met a guy who had pushed a shopping cart, or a bunch of different carts, through every State in the lower forty eight. He had chronological receipts for the six year journey. California was his last State. He said he was going to do it again through different parts of the country.

Talking with this guy was a moving experience. He had taken in the sights everywhere he went. He knew the country better than anyone I have ever met before and since. Listening to his stories and witnessing the joy he felt recounting them made me curious. I had also met panhandlers and bums begging their way around the country. I tried pan-handling, but never felt comfortable doing it. I just took off with whatever I could scrounge up and let fate work out the details. Which it did. So many people would hear my stories and take me in, feed me or simply give me money.

Anyway, the month went by, I hiked around, spent a lot of time at the Hot Springs and collected gear for my adventure. I knew I just had to go if I was going to realize my dream. I learned that if you want to do something you just have to go. Step forward without hesitation. Whether it's off a cliff, up a cliff, into a wave or life, it takes commitment. So there I was on the verge of what I would consider the idea of an adventure life.

After graduation I hitchhiked from California to Washington and that is where my life of adventure really took shape. To have gone from drop out to graduation with ease and some grace was a strong victory for me. I realized I had an easy path through the world and I wanted to take advantage of it. All I had to do was follow the path that was cleared in front of me. Happy go lucky and caution to the wind, I just went, where and when it suited me.

My first premeditated solo adventure into the world was to forever change me. I was seventeen with a thick mash of long hair. I got rides easily from people that said they didn´t pick up hitchhikers. They said it was something in my eyes. It became a rule to get eye contact and I wore the heels of all my shoes. My mom and best friend, brother of my sister in law and life-long adventure buddy, Matt, dropped me off at highway 395 in California. I can remember the fear and anticipation as I got out of the car and said good-bye. I got my first ride in five minutes all the way to Bakersfield, California by a guy that just wanted someone to talk to. We shared stories for four hours and it just felt good. I could feel myself change as I was whisked from Southern California to Washington State in around twenty four hours. That's as long as it takes to drive straight through.

One of the other times I tried to leave I ended up in a police station. I was fifteen and took off with these two guys from Florida. It turned out they had killed a guy, claiming it was because he had raped one of their girlfriends. It seemed plausible at the time. Well, on our way out of town we passed a cop car waiting to turn out onto the road. There was a lot of traffic, but the guys just locked on to the cop and rear ended a car in front of us. The bumper of their VW bug got hung up underneath the other car. Both guys bolted and I just followed them. In hindsight, I should have stayed with the car. I hadn't done anything wrong. Anyway, we got chased down by a bunch of guys in a work truck, we split up and I got away. At least it seemed I had gotten away. I ran into a half built office building and climbed up into the rafters. There was a sheet of plywood up there and I hunkered down on top of it and waited for the smoke to clear. Eventually, a cop was searching the building and was right below me. I remember thinking, "What am I doing, I am just running away from home?" Then I called out, "Hey, don´t shoot. I´ll come down." He looked up, the look on his face... He never considered looking up. When they had us all rounded up in the car I remember looking at the guys. It was the look of people realizing they were truly fucked.

At that point we were only a few blocks from the police station and within a few minutes they got out on their way to prison. As a minor I was a total pain in the ass for the cop. I ended up handcuffed to a bench in a substation in Apple Valley, the town I lived in, waiting for my mom. For the first hour I gave the cop bunk information and when he entered the information my parents didn´t exist. He was pissed he had to start over and he slammed his hands on the table in frustration. I didn´t feel bad. Up till then cops were the bad guys. They hassled my family my entire life, hassled my friends and were just looking for problems. Sure they have a rough job dealing with scum of all sorts, but only dicks become cops. Sorry if you're a cop, but your job would be easier if you weren't such assholes.

I have done the Washington to California trip a bunch of times. The West Coast was my back yard. It just felt good to be free and out there, sharing stories and learning as I went. One time much later in life, right after 9/11, I made the trip and it took me four days. The generosity of the nation was drying up and people were just unfriendly and sometimes outright hostile. I have seen a gambit of reactions, but none could detour me from my love of hitchhiking. Sometimes I would hook up with other hitchhikers. We would pick up girls and take them to a hotel swimming pool. Only when we got kicked out would they realize we didn't even have a room. Sometimes people would take me home, party me out, feed me and give me a ride back to the road. I was charmed and I wanted to exploit it.

I have been taken in by all sorts of people over the years, including families, preachers, weirdoes and businessmen. Once I got a ride late at night by a congressman. We smoked cracked as we were tearing through the night when he totally missed the exit ramp. We were going fast and the road was heavily banked to the right. He just drove straight off the ramp. The car launched into midair and landed with a crunch. He started freaking out, telling me I had to say I was driving because it would ruin his career. We landed so hard that the car tacoed and the windshield shattered. At one point I was floating weightlessly, and then I was slammed into the dashboard. I told him I didn't even have a driver's license and just walked away in the opposite direction of him. Another time this guy picked me up and we were just talking. He told me he had just bought the car for his wife. We were flying in the fast lane when a minivan veered into our lane. We slowed down and the guy got back into his lane. Then as we tried to get by him, he pushed us over to the shoulder. The guy I was with couldn't find the horn. The left front tire caught on the edge of the pavement and next thing I knew we were spinning in circles across both lanes. The smoke cleared and

we were faced the wrong way with cars whizzing by, just missing head on collisions. We were both shaking from the terror. He said he thought I had saved his life. I guess he thought I had a guardian angel or something. We had to sit on the shoulder for a few minutes until our nerves calmed down.

I guess something about me is disarming at times. It´s strange to me because most of the time I'm totally in your face. It's practically impossible to miss me when I let my freak flag fly. Over the years I have evolved from a long haired grunger into a tattoo headed cannibal. I wear a necklace made from animal parts and the center piece is a hand-carved skull made of bone. With time the skull has aged and yellowed, causing it to look even more sinister. I am not sure how many conversations I've stopped. I would be walking through a supermarket and some women are talking gossip... totally absorbed in their conversation, then they see me and the talking stops, they glance for a second and look away. After they think they are out of ear shot they say stuff like, "Did you see that?" or "Oh my god?" I have gotten used to it. After nearly twenty years with a tattooed dome I have heard all kinds of reactions. A lot of people can´t resist approaching me and asking questions. The most common question is "Did that hurt?" I've come up with a bunch of different answers. The real answer is, hell ya it hurt. The skin on the head is really dense and dulls the shit out of the needles. After a while it just bounces half the time. It must not have hurt that much because I came back for more twice.

It seems that over the years head tattoos must be more common. Either, I just don´t notice the stares as much or it´s just not as shocking anymore. On the other hand, my head has got me into more conversations then I can count. Very rarely has there been hostility. People ask me why I did it and my answer is usually, "To separate me from everyone else." I've also had my share of people lose themselves and palm my skull. I turn to look at them and they just look shocked they had even touched a strangers head. That only happens when my head is freshly shaved with a razor, which hardly happens anymore out of laziness. At concerts tons of people have taken pictures and the video cameras always find me.

# 5

1-10-13 Katuwira, Playas Los Rocas, Peru 3:10am

I woke up at 2:00 am. I´ve been here for around three weeks. Here is on a desert beach in Northern Peru. When I got here I was looking for a cheap place to sleep and maybe some work. What I found are a bunch of good friends that really need some help. I've been ready to leave for weeks. How to describe this place? I guess it all starts with Mario. He is half Peruvian and half Japanese. He's from Chiclayo, the city of one million ten miles inland from here. He moved to Japan when he was younger, after fifteen years he burned out, bought a chunk of barren beach in Peru and built Katuwira. It's a hodge-podge of bungalows, pyramids and fallen apart structures. It´s more of a surf camp than a hostel. It´s its own little town complete with a restaurant and a bar. Everything is half done... half built, half repaired or half forgotten about. Over the years, with Mario´s compulsion for expansion, the restobar has out grown at least two buildings and is now on the beach a hundred meters from the security of the compound. This is so hard to explain... I got here before Christmas and decided to stay and help finish the new restaurant. Everything was half-done. The wiring was completed months ago, but none of it worked and they tore a bunch of it out. I built the bar and a table out of scraps we salvaged from Mario's friend in Pimentel. Then I did repairs on the compound. Then I fixed the broke down truck... then the motorcycle, now I am rewiring the restaurant. They have left some of the wiring in and I am going crazy trying to figure it out. Switches and plugs that were new three months ago are rusted and failing. The constant wind, blasting sun and moist nights eat everything. Now it's eating me. I'm smoking a pack and a half a day, drinking rum by the liter and now I can't sleep. I had just moved into the oldest pyramid, made of bamboo and palm thatch. It is in need of love like everything else here. One night we ended up partying in it and I pointed out that all of Katuwira is missing its creator. With all the stuff going on it suffers from a lack of Mario's attention. The next morning I woke to a failing wall getting torn off to put in a new door. Everything I own is covered in the sand that had built up in the thatch over the years. The first day I cleaned, but with every hammer stroke it is raining sand. Three days later the wall is still down and the door incomplete. On New Year's Eve I lent Matts army hoodie to a friend I went to a chongo with. He said he was

going home for a bit, then coming back for the festival. The next morning I saw him and he didn´t have it, but said he'd bring it back in the morning. That hoodie means a lot to me and I am a jackass for losing it. I so want to leave here, this place is driving me nuts. The wiring is almost complete and I am getting closer to finding the guy with the hoodie. The hoodie is the reason I have stayed. I want to help here, but it is just too much for me. The upsides are never ending arroz con mariscos, ceviche and pescado, use of the moto and truck, plus trips to the markets with Mario to buy fish and produce for the restaurant. I like Peruvian seafood, but after three weeks it is just too much rice. Besides eggs and bread for breakfast, they eat tons of rice... I am hungry all the time.

I had pizza today. At Pizza Hut no less. It was my second trip, in two days, to Chiclayo. I was trying to video call my boy and the only reliable Wi-Fi is at Starbucks in the mall. I'm not a fan of malls, but it is such a contrast to Katuwira. I really wanted a cheese burger. I was even looking forward to McDonalds, but they only served ice cream. I have had too much time to think sitting here. I need a change and my hoodie.

**The father's son**

I have only met my grandfather, Johnny, twice. Both times he came and stayed with us for a bit. From what my dad said he was a beatnik, loved jazz, young women and marijuana. My dad said he didn't drink and that's about all I got from him. But a few years ago, at my dad's funeral, I talked with my grandma Beverly and she had a different story. She said he was a drunk, abusive and a good for nothing with a weakness for hookers. Go figure. I really only have two clear memories of him. The first was in Seattle when he came and lived with us for a while. I remember him teaching me to tie my shoes and that's about it. The second visit I was a bit older and I remember him giving the kids silver dollars for the arcade in the mall next to our house. I also remember he had a young girlfriend that would visit. When I say young, I'm thinking around twenty. Considering he was over fifty, that was quite young and memorable. I am pretty sure he was born in 1920. He has kids all over the States and from what my grandma says two kids from different women with the same name. He must have liked the nearly thousand year old family names of Robert John or it may be John Robert. My family name can be traced back to 1102 due to the abundance of clergy, soldiers and professionals that kept good records. From what I could come up with the Dittons took control of parts of Wales and England for over a hundred years until the Normans took

over. My family crest is a Sable Field with five sparrows. Most of the males in my family are very big men. My uncle the shortest at just over six feet tall and my father was not the tallest at nearly 6' 4". My father had red hair and hazel-green eyes. Moreover, it seems my family has a history of drifters and drunks and it seems I fit the mold well enough.

My mother on the other hand is 5' 2" and shrinking. She is the older of two children. Her father died when she was sixteen. My grandmother on her side was an only child. From what I understand my great-grandparents came over on a boat and after my great-grandmother got pregnant my great-grandfather returned to Italy, leaving my great-grandmother to raise their child alone. I can almost remember my Great-grandma. My grandma Thelma was 4' 11" and survived three different husbands. All of which died of cancer. I knew my grandma Thelma very well and she always helped me any time I needed it. I went and stayed with her for a while after my last grandpa died.

My grandma Beverly, on my dad's side, was a fire cracker. For the last ten years or so she had been battling cancer. In between battles she was involved with the church, community organizations and charities. She loved square dancing, flowers and home canning. I can remember visiting her as a child. It was 1980; the year Mt. Saint Helens erupted. Yakima, where she lived got covered in ash. Anyway, she was always baking and canning and we always came home with loads of food. Not that long ago she told me a story of going for a hike with the boys. At some point they had jumped over a small creek. She cleared the creek easy enough, but when she landed she broke her ankle. It was like she had just realized she was seventy years old. Both my grandmas were awesome people, kind, generous and there any time you needed them. Grandma Thelma died a few years ago and Beverly died during writing this book.

I don´t need to say it, but I moved a lot when I was growing up. Besides getting shipped back and forth between parents, my dad always seemed to be in a new town, always in Washington, every time I came back. My mom lived in the same house for my entire childhood. Thinking about it, I must have attended twenty different schools. At some points I never went to school. One day my dad told me to find something to do and I told him I would have something to do if I was in school. He stared at me and realized he had forgotten to enroll me in school. I can remember some really cool teachers though. One was in the running to ride in the space shuttle that blew up. We watched it live at school. Another was a mountain

climber that left school early to attempt Mt. Everest. I seem to remember he almost made it, but came back missing toes due to frostbite.

Moving around a lot and living in new towns, I had a lot of first days as the new kid. I remember lots of bullies. One area we lived in had one school for three towns, all grades. So, totally hicked out small towns and me, a greasy long haired biker brat. That was my life. Lucky for me I had two step brothers, one younger and one older, to pave the way. Bad lucky. When I arrived the assholes figured I would be easy prey. You see my older brother, John, could run fast and I remember gangs of kids chasing him home from school. He would talk shit then run. The younger one, Biscuit, pretty much had to survive the after math. My problem was that I didn´t run...

Except at night when we would sneak up to the general market where all the kids hung out on weekends. There weren't enough people to have real parties, so they just sat on their tailgates listening to country music late into the night. We would hide in the bushes and throw rocks at them till they chased us. It was exciting and we never got caught. Not that we didn't get into trouble though. One of the things we liked to do was break into the lumber mill at night and jump off the towers into the saw dust piles. This was fun until one kid jumped and after he landed he started screaming. When we pulled his legs out of the sawdust and his shoes erupted in flames. I guess the sawdust had spontaneously combusted under the surface. He was screaming like a banshee. He couldn't walk for weeks and needless to say he couldn't hang out with us anymore.

My friend and closest neighbor back then was Robbie. His dad was a Canadian survivalist and had built their giant cabin from scratch. Robbie's dad had a reloading shop in the basement and we used his gun powder to hone our skills at making pipe bombs. I learned how to shoot all kinds of crazy weapons. If that wasn't enough, we went on a gas huffing bender for a few weeks. Robbie had been held back in school and in Jr. High the varsity coach wanted him to play for the high school. He stayed with us in Jr. High and was one of the biggest kids on the field. Once he was playing with broken ribs and in the huddle he was crying, telling us to give him the ball. He plowed through kids the entire game. After a while no one wanted to tackle him. He had his heart set on joining the military as soon as possible. I have never heard from him since I moved.

In that same town, I got bullied my first year by the Millers. A huge family with what I would consider genetic dick disorder. Just like the kids, the father would always start shit with my dad at the bar. When my dad beat

him up the sons came to school and took it out on me. The problem for me was that I was like eleven and they were in high school... bad asses huh? My family was never very popular. Most of the abuse was in the form of getting pushed around, shit thrown in my hair and threatened constantly. Most kids and some of the teachers thought the abuse was funny. For me they were just a bunch of assholes. Go figure why people would shoot up schools or workplaces. I suppose I am still bitter about it. One valuable lesson I learned from those guys was that if you just swung on them from the beginning, it wouldn't look so appealing the next time. I assume the main thing that made me a target was that I would not back down when I was supposed to cower, beg or run. Puzzle pieces come in all shapes and sizes.

One thing I had going for me on those first days was athletic ability. The last one picked on the first day, but a few weeks later I was picking teams. I was particularly good at football and this helped me overcome the many challenges. I could run fast and was fearless. Little did everyone know the person they were helping to create with all their bullshit. I had something to prove and threw myself into the task. It didn't help much with the older kids, but with my peers it was invaluable.

My other life in California couldn't have been more different. My oldest brother was Mr. Cool, had a band, a music store and this gave me a pass. The fact that I was Keith's little brother got me into parties, clubs and with way too many girls. I have pretty much had a girlfriend since Jr. High. It's really lame that this easy way caused me to let the best ones go. For a year in high school I was with this ridiculously awesome girl Beth. She was cool and gorgeous. Towards the end of our relationship, if you could call it that, we never talked about it. I was screwing around way too much and felt guilty, so I broke it off. She was super cool about it and soon after hooked up with a friend of mine. Years later I saw her at a friend's house and found myself wanting her all over again. I've only seen her that one time and we were both in relationships. I have never stopped kicking myself in the ass for that stupidity. I let her walk away without a phone number or some way to find her again.

So there I was in a completely different world with my father. My dad was poor. My mom was middle class. With my dad I got two new pairs of Levis each school year. With my mom I got whatever I wanted. I had two bikes and my dad made me give one to my brother for Christmas. My dad hardly ever had TV. My mom had a satellite dish. With my dad I was a target for assholes, with my mom I was popular and no one ever hassled

me. With my dad I had to share a room with my brothers. With my mom I had my own phone line...

I had that phone number for years. It was left over from my oldest brother. But, one day it got disconnected. I was the only kid in the house and I didn't sit on the phone for hours, so it was unnecessary. Anyway, after it was turned off I could still get calls for years. Then one day it just stopped ringing. Weeks later some friends showed up and ask about my number. It turned out some older lady had gotten the number and with my friends calling all the time, even in the middle of the night, she eventually got upset. We were partying one night and I thought it would be funny to call her and ask if I had any messages... I got silence, then a click.

The stability of my mom's let me forge lifelong friendships. With my dad moving all the time I had to earn the right to live in peace. The times with my dad I can hardly remember the names of my friends. With my mom I still have close friend nearly twenty five years later. I feel this situation of polar opposites created the person I am today. I like creature comforts, but have no problem rolling my sleeping bag out in the dirt. I wish I could provide domestic security for my son, but part of me needs the dirt, the rough edges and the instability to fend off depression, anxiety and frustration. I truly do not understand how people work at the same job, live in the same town or house for all or most of their lives. It's like they are hungry to achieve a certain level of comfort, and then just call it a day or a life.

## 6

1/13/13 Katuwira, Playas Las Rocas, Peru 9:20 pm

About forty minutes ago the restaurant was attacked by a mob of thugs. In hind sight it was our own fault. Mario was pissed we didn´t lock up the kitchen and turn off the lights. Reasonable considering there were six thugs with knifes cooking themselves a feast. Outside there were about fifteen other guys throwing rocks at us. The funniest part is there were two Colombian touristas and two local guys in there at the time. The girls climbed up onto the roof.

Sorry… it is the next morning... Anyway, the thugs attacked the car of the local guys in front of the restaurant,

Now it's Wednesday morning and I am in Huaraz twelve hours from the madness. I got my first look at the Cordillera Blanca with the sunrise. I forgot how impressive it was... though I only saw it in pictures. OK, now to finish the story from Sunday night. The thugs were roaming the beach and trashing anything they could find after a concert. Like idiots we stood guard, almost daring them to come back and cause problems. At one point there were about twenty of them, but two in particular were trashing a new car that belong to some guys drinking beer with us after a long day. Every time we asked them to stop, they started chucking rocks. No one was willing to stop them and for a few minutes they went unchecked. Finally, I looked at the guy who owned the car and asked if he wanted to save it. He said please. So like a jack ass I charged out there and when one of the punks searched for a rock I just attacked. I figured it was safer in the middle of them. I had him knocked out and hit the next guy just in time to see his buddy attacking with a nine foot log, six inched thick. He was too weak for this weapon and I caught it easily. I took it and started swinging around clockwise, thinking I could get enough force to take out the three punks in front of me. Half way around I connected with an older guy that was running in from behind. I scored a direct hit to his skull. He was unconscious for at least twenty minutes. I hit another with a glancing blow and noticed two of the punks fighting each other. I knocked one guy down and they all scrambled away.

When I turned around one of the guys with the car had Chato, a guy I work with, in a choke hold. Getting him free, everyone beat the crap out the knocked out guy. After the mob had bolted I stood there screaming like a maniac and some of the guys down the road turned around like they were gonna come back, then thought better and continued on their way back to town. There were still the guys in the restaurant's kitchen, but I had no desire to fight six guys armed with knives.

Mario was clueless about the whole thing until he heard me screaming. He came out and kicked the guys out of the kitchen. Then they started to head into Katuwira. I pointed it out to Mario, he said something and they turned back towards town. I took a few minutes then, went to my cabin, drank some rum, smoked some pot and collected my thoughts. The crazy part of the story is that was my first sober day in months. I had to work all day and I knew it was going to be a long one. Furthermore, I had been giving boxing lessons to Caesar, the cook. Once the melee started it just flowed out of me. I started to pen the events when someone came and got me to talk with Mario. After a discussion on what happened and why,

one of the kids broke down and cried for a few minutes. I could understand the shock of the whole thing and no one even looked at him. Mario gave the boys and the Colombians a ride to Pimentel so they could catch a collectivo to Chiclayo.

After all was said and done we proceeded to start in on a bottle of rum. When the coke came out I said I was high enough on adrenaline. But after a time the adrenaline wore off and I only remember the first couple of sniff, then woke up on an old couch outside. The next morning Mario said we drank two liters of rum between four guys. If I was hung up in Katuwira, that broke the spell. The day before I was talking to some tourists and they asked what I was doing there. I told them "Waiting for something to happen." The guy laughed and said "Oh, one of those trips? Waiting for someone to pull you out." I guess that was close enough. That morning I checked in with everyone and tried to get some sleep, but I had the spins and it was pointless. I decided to head into Chiclayo and buy a bus ticket. The next morning I left without a word. Now here I am in Huaraz. I am pretty sore. I got a bunch of scraps on my knees, a small knot on my head and I can´t close either fist completely. I am starting to feel better. In any case, I got any desire for violence out of my system and have put that craziness behind me. I have a bit of a headache from the altitude. It's never a good idea to go from sea level to 10,000 feet in three hours. I am gonna acclimatize for a bit and see what I can find here. There are thirty three mountains over 20,000 feet, countless lakes and rivers in the most beautiful mountain range I have ever seen.

It's a strange thing to exchange chaoses, if that's even a word. I just went from the chaos of humanity to the chaos of Mother Nature. I just need to look around and I brace myself for the next shrug of a continent. In the end it's the same violent finish. What's the difference between being ground down by the daily grind and giving nature the same chance? I guess it's a matter of terms. I didn't choose the thugs, but I choose the risk in the mountains. An awesome and tragic rock climber and mountaineer once replied angrily when asked, "Why do you have a death wish?" Dan Osmond's reply was "Death wish... I have a life wish, to feel alive." For me that is the challenge... to feel alive. I don't know who said it first and I am sure it wasn't me... Just give up... giving up. Do something special. Make a difference, especially if it's only for you. I would never call myself foolish, a fool, but not foolish. I've never been one to squander a situation where greatness is possible. It's so hard for me to stop. It just feels good to go above and beyond what anyone expects from you.

After I graduated High School my mom let me throw a graduation party. The garage had been cut in half to make an office. It was on the other side of the house from my mom's bedroom and we could get loud. A few dozen friends came and someone brought me a six pack of MGD. Some girlfriends had offered themselves to me. We were in my room talking about a threesome, when I got a knock on the door. It was Matt. "Go away!" Joker was having problem with some friends at the party. It was about to get ugly. A few of my friends didn't click with the group. I don't think it was because they were Mexican… and sort of gangster… anyway… Reluctantly I had to go defuse the situation. That cost me… The bullshit just killed the mood. The girls never offered themselves up again. The party was back on track, more or less. I can't remember most of the night, except for cleaning up.

Matt and I were cleaning up the worst of the mess when I found the last MGD. It was warm and I put it in the freezer. Matt was wobbling and mumbling and then he disappeared. He went and found a bed and climbed in it. I continued on with my cleaning and remembered the last MGD was in the freezer. It was so cold that it turned to slush when I opened it. I set it on the shelf to thaw out a bit while I was cleaning up cigarette butts and keg cups. I spaced it off for a while before I remembered about it. Oh ya… that beer. I didn't even look at it and took a drink. It was kinda warm so I started chugging. I was half way through the bottle before I realized the bottle I was drinking was full of cigarette butts. I heaved into the garbage can. Then I barely made it to the bathroom before I puked up my toenails. I drank water till I was full and expelled that… over and over again. Somewhat recovered I went and found Matt and told him. He went and puked. To this day more than twenty years later I can vomit on command just from thinking about what had happened to me. My stomach is turning now just describing it. I suppose yours is too. I don't think I finished that beer.

After the puking episode, Bob came home. "Triple B" as he is known in jail or so he says. Bob was a degenerate. He had been mostly deaf most of his life, was an orphan, collected disability and rented a room. He was a belligerent barfly and dated the most ridiculous women. Robocop was around for a while. She had a bad hip replacement or something and walked like Robocop towards the end of the movie. They were on whatever drugs they could find, but they never stole anything. Anyway, Bob came home wasted asking for Mushrooms he knew I had. Just to get him to shut up I gave him some. An hour later we were barricading him in the office. I had

to lock the garage door from the outside. We could her him howling and carrying on like a babbling idiot for hours. When I checked on him in the morning he was curled up on the couch hiding under a blanket. When we walked in he started babbling again. He promised to chill out. He said he was trying to get some sleep.

During these times I had Mushrooms, some friends and I had taken some and tore the house inside out. Every light was on, every cabinet open, TV's and radios all turned on and a general mess everywhere you looked. At some point my mom had had enough. She marched out of her room and scowled at me. She proclaimed "I don't know what you're on, but you better get off it." For me this was the funniest thing I had ever heard. She stormed off and locked herself in her room. I pleaded with her through her door. Eventually she let me in. As I was lying next to her we talked about the time my dad had given her Shrooms in the 70's. It didn't take long before we were both laughing our asses off. I promised to take my drugs somewhere else.

After high school I hit the road and ended up back where I had already been. The difference was the sweetest girl a guy could have the misfortune to hurt. And I mean in an irrevocable way. I've been in my share of relationships and understand heartache. But it was the way this situation unfolded that has haunted me since. Enter into one life... Candy. She was the daughter of one of my Dads closest friends, Wizard… When we got together it seemed the natural coming together of family. And it was... It's kinda funny in a tragic way, but I spent that summer on the slopes of Mt. Rainer with her and she would always speak words of love to me in Spanish. I didn't understand, but it moved me just the same. We spent over a month in each other's embrace. Neither of us eighteen years old, but bound till death. In August on my 18th birthday I got a settlement from a car accident I got into when I was twelve. I had to return to California to cash the check, which I did, with promises to return as soon as possible.

A few weeks after my birthday, I returned to the mountain with Matt. We stopped and picked up Candy in Coos Bay, Oregon and took her to her dad's cabin on Mount Rainer. We partied it up for a while till it was time to get jobs and then we moved into town to live with my dad and Kathy. They had moved back to a trailer park in Bonney Lake. We slept in the back of my truck and got jobs through a temp agency we heard about from one of my dad's prison buddies, Paul, lovingly know to me as "Convict". Anyway, one job led to the next and eventually we ended up at the "Bon Marche" distribution center in Renton, Washington. After a few

months they offered me a full time position which I turned down. For me anyway, Matt and I were on an adventure together and it was both or neither.

These things all blur together, but the fact that Matt was there closes the gap on the time. We were at Rainbow Valley, I suppose Candy was there. This particular trip had more twist than a pretzel. I think it was the same trip we gave Candy's brother Acid because he was swelling up from a bee sting. Bad judgment yes, but it worked for whatever reason. We were hanging out in camp talking about how much stuff people drop when they are parading around a drug induced carnival. The give and take of the lost and found led me to the idea of the moss doob. As a practical joke I had rolled up a big fat joint out of moss... yes the stuff that grows on everything in the Pacific Northwest. I threw it on the trail in front of our camp. It was evening and there were lights shining every which way in the darkness. Within a minute we heard some guy telling his friend, "You always got to look on the ground. You never know what you'll find. See? What did I tell ya? Ha Ha..." He took the bait and asked his buddy for a light. Then they disappeared behind the trees. I still laugh out loud when I think about it. We were rolling for hours.

Later on that night our camp was slowly getting invaded by random people. It started with a campfire and some crazy discussion and they swarmed in like moths to flame. Somehow or another I convinced a bunch of people that I was sitting on the hood of my truck because my hood kept flying up. I asked some of them to take my place so I could take a piss. Which, they gladly did. This freed me up for talking story. As camp kept filling up, Matt felt more and more crowded. He said he was going to find a quiet spot. Out of sight, out of mind. I continued on with my manipulation. After a while the crowd thinned and I remembered about Matt. It was just me and one last kid holding down the hood of the truck. I started to walk away and he pleaded, "What about me? What am I supposed to do?" I wish I would have told him he had to find a replacement. I just told him "Get down, it was just a joke." He looked at me skeptically and I nodded, and then giggled. He hopped down and looked at the hood in disbelief. It didn't pop open. I walk away leaving him staring at the hood.

I scanned the area around our camp. There were glowing people everywhere. Some people were on fire. Everything looked like chaos. That's when I found him. A hundred yards out passed the milling throng of day-glow people was a tiny campfire. Matt had found a big tree lying on its side in the middle of a huge grass field. As I approached he had a nice little

warming fire tucked up against the trunk. He was alone. I came over to his fire and asked how he was doing. He smiled. He was doing better. We were just sitting there talking when some guy walked by claiming to be Satan. I asked him "How can you be Satan if I am Satan?" After a short discussion it was clear neither of us were Satan. But the conversation started to attract a crowd. Someone threw some more wood on the fire. I looked around and realized the crowd had grown. Matt looked at me and said "See? This is how it is with you." When we walked away the fire was the size of a truck. The last things I remember was a truck pulling up and throwing an old outhouse on the fire and then a bunch of bodybuilders carrying giant chunks of telephone pole and throwing those on it. We got back to our camp and it was just us. The bonfire was taking on a life of its own. People were standing twenty feet back the fire was so hot. Out in the middle of that field, under a building of burning material was the tree Matt started his fire next to and it was surrounded by thousands of people for the rest of the night. The next morning there were dozens of people sleeping on the ground around the smoldering remains.

At another job we were set to arranging displays for Quaker Oats. Our job was to take the cans out of the box and put them on flats destined for the end of an aisle in a supermarket. No matter which one you removed the next one would be looking right at you. Well, not long after, Matt moved back to California. I brought in my buddy Nick and we carried on for a few more weeks. After a few months of digging big ass tubs of oats out of a box my grip was a vice. When someone would give me a nice firm handshake I would reply in kind. Even the biggest men were amazed at the strength of my grip. When they asked how I my hands had become vices I would laugh and reply "Quaker Oats… lots and lots of oats."

With Matt gone, Convict and I decided we should get an apartment together. We were both living with my parents and in a position to move out. This was the beginning of the end to the first chapter of my life.

## 7

When Convict and I moved into our apartment it was new for both of us. It was my first place of my own and Convict had just finished serving sixteen years in prison. At first Candy would come to visit on weekends, before long she was pretty much there all the time. Convict didn't mind because he liked her and she kept the place clean. Moreover, we were hardly

there because we worked all the time and had an hour commute each way. It couldn't have been more than a month when I saw Ali for the first time. She was living a few doors down and she walked by one morning taking the trash out. Something about her hit the stupid button in my brain. I left a note on her door asking about her. Well, her roommate started taking the trash out every day. I assumed she liked me. After some time I met Ali and promptly dumped Candy and kicked her out. After breaking Candy's heart, I hooked up with Ali. This was one of the stupidest things I've done in my life. Not only did I piss off the order of the universe, I disappointed my dad and his crew. As this was going on, Ali's roommate was mad too and moved out. So I filled in the vacuum, bailed on Convict days before rent was due and moved in with Ali. A few days later I ran into Convict on the second floor balcony outside his apartment. He just flipped out and attacked me with a sucker punch to the eye, splitting open my eyebrow. When his prison mentality kicked in it was to the death. He tried to smash my head into the wall and then throw me off the balcony. My instinct was to beat on the ribs I had cracked a month earlier.

You see when we were living at my dad's I had a pair of light weight boxing gloves. I used to box the neighborhood in order. I was strong and good at boxing. Well, one day Convict decided I needed a lesson and stepped up to the plate. Right away I scored a shot to his face and he went agro. Out of desperation I just pounded into his ribs, doing some serious damage to his aged body. He was a sport about it and we were still friends, but he was in bad shape for a long time. He never put the gloves back on, neither did the neighborhood kids.

After a short battle with Convict, we separated and I went to the hospital for stitches. That was an awesome punch and only my Ditton hard head kept him from knocking me out. I have only been knocked out a few times in my life, once was when I crashed my ten speed. My step brother "Biscuit" and I were racing to the airport market, the only place that would sell cigarettes to kids, with a note from their parents. He was on a Trail 90 on the side of the highway and I was on a trail below the road on my ten speed. I had quick release rims and must have had the lever backwards. When I went through some bushes it unlocked the front wheel. There were a series of driveways along the road that made jumps on the trail. Well, let's just say I was going as fast as I could and when I hit the next jump my front wheel came off and I went over the handlebars. When I woke up Biscuit was standing over me laughing his ass off. I was a bit ahead

of him and he saw it all. Anyway, I don't even remember leaving the house to this day.

For some perspective here are some times I've taken blows to the head. Remember I was saying we ripped off the landlord's fish pond... I lied through my teeth to my dad's face after he asked for the truth and when he found the net with the fish food out by the mailbox he was livid. In front of three cops he backhanded me so hard I landed on my feet before I fell down. You see my dad was a giant of a man and I was hundreds pounds wet. After he hit me I flipped completely over summersault style, hit the ground, but still wasn't knocked out. The cops said it was the hardest hit they'd seen, and were impressed I tried to get up immediately. Another time Stone and I got into a confrontation with a bunch of tweekers, meth-heads, and while I was beating up a few of them one came up behind me with a pipe to the head. I had to eat soup for a month, but I kept pounding the guys. Another time my brothers, some friends and I were doing head rushes... this is just hyperventilating, holding your breath, leaning against a wall and someone pushes on your chest till you pass out. Well, I fell out a second story window, landing on my head. I kinda remember falling out the window. Well, you get the picture; I have a solid jaw, so to speak.

Ali was a beautiful girl, even though she got into a car accident and smashed her cheek bone, leaving her with a droopy eye. She also had a hellion of a two year old named Nick. Nick's dad was a degenerate who lived with his mom so he wouldn't have to get a job and pay child support. This dumbass took pride in the fact that his child had no manners, cussed and basically ran over his mom. Ali for her part was a second generation welfare mom. Her mom, Rhonda, had kids from different guys and no one was sure whose kids were whose. I think the strategy was to collect child support from different guys for the same child. Her philosophy was to get pregnant, get the guy to sign the birth certificate, than let welfare collect the money. I am only telling this story to give you an idea what I was up against. I didn't understand the dynamics at the time. I was just another sucker.

I understand why Convict was upset, we didn't talk for a while and as you will see crazy stuff happens and changes everything. After the fight, Ali and I moved into a new apartment not far away. The relationship was a nightmare. There was never physical violence, but constant fighting and breaking up. So, it just seemed logical that another child would solve our problems. And just to make things more interesting we helped her mom get an apartment in our complex after she got evicted from hers. Within a few

months she and her new sucker had weaseled their way into the manager position. You remember the key was to get pregnant and then destroy the father after he signed the birth certificate. The destruction part was much easier with the team captain living across the sidewalk. But, in the mists of chaos the universe threw me a life line, though I didn't know it at the time and it took a while to materialize.

On weekends Ali's younger sister would come over for coaching in the art of destruction. She was also pregnant, but had gone a step further by getting married. Her sucker was Tony. Like me, he was no fan of the family he married into, and so instead of going to Rhonda's he would turn into my house. We only had one thing in common, Rhonda, but it was enough. He was a preppy new wave kinda arrogant and I was a greasy, death metal, drag racing nut. For the first few visits we hardly talked and when I did I mumbled. Everyone says used to mumble back then, it was before I really wanted to be heard. He says he couldn't understand me for months. Either he got used to it or I cleaned up my speech. I imagine it is like punk rock, it's just gibberish till you get used to it, then it's crystal clear. Well, we both knew why he was there and I was more than happy to offer him an alternative. Tony had just started tattooing and before long Ali and I were at his studio getting each other's names.

I can remember Tony, slowly evolving into "Stone", looking at me and asking "Are you sure you want her name on you?" I was in the grips of stupidity and went ahead with it. It was small and on the inside of my forearm. Not a problem really, except I let someone else cover it up. All my bad tattoos are from someone else. But, at the time I was eighteen and it seemed the dysfunctional relationship would never end for real. So the things Stone and I had in common brought us together. We had sisters pregnant, we couldn't stand Rhonda and we were both trying to figure out who we would become. But the bond that ties was yet to come.

You must know that all the while, when Ali and I were fighting I would go to my dad's house for sanctuary. For a long time Candy was babysitting my little brothers. She was always a friend and there for me to talk to. I had realized my mistake, but there wasn't anything to be done for it. She had gone on and got pregnant from some dumbass, had a kid, then hooked up with a sort of second step-brother of mine, Little Danny. He is the son of the psycho dad from earlier in the story. He had a different mom then my step brothers, but still considered Kat his mom, as a lot of us did. While we haven't talked much over the years, we are still family of a

sort. I know this is getting confusing. Just stick with me and it will sort itself out.

At some point Ali had taken over babysitting my little brothers and our house had become a daycare. There were about eight kids in all, including Ali's younger siblings and other neighborhood kids who would come over to play. The kids ranged from two to eight years of age and it was always chaos. I would come home from work and the kids would scream "Bro", as I was known to them at the time. Kids being kids, they were always in trouble and this lead me to develop a rule. If one kid cries, they were all in trouble. I would sit in my room spying on them from my upstairs window, watching them tease each other. When someone started to cry they would all come running, eight different stories, all of them lies. The punishment was one minute in the corner for every year in age. All the parents supported me and my job after work was corner monitor. If you looked out of the corner your time started over. As it turned out the older kids were the first ones outside. The two youngest, Nick and my little brother "Baby" thought of it as a game and would be there for hours sometimes, giggling all the while.

Ali's pregnancy went to term and enters into the world Micah Ditton II. My time with Micah was magical. He was never sick and rarely cried. He would stare at me for hours and in turn I would stare back in amazement. He was my peace in an otherwise crazy world. On weekends we would go visit this crazy guy I got weed for. He thought the government had put a chip in his brain, but he was harmless. His stories were entertaining to say the least. When Micah was around eight weeks old, Ali and I were introduced to crack for the first time by our neighbors, John and Marla. For me it was just plain expensive, but Ali really took to it. So on payday we would have Ali's brother "Little Tony", there were three Tonys at the time, babysit while we went next-door to smoke crack. I had just turned nineteen and in the end of August 1993, after a night of smoking crack, I woke up to go to work on a Saturday. I got up as usual, made my lunch and when I went to give my family a kiss goodbye, I knew something wasn't right. Ali was on her left side facing away from me and baby Micah was in the same position up against her back.

I just stood looking at them. I stared at my baby boy. I instantly knew the worst had happened. He wasn't breathing. After some time, I rolled him over and the blood had settled in his face. He had been dead for hours. I just stood there, my heart crushed. I knew the worst was yet to come. I had to wake up Ali and tell her. I wanted to run away. I wanted to

join him. Anything but do the thing that would make it real. I just stared at my child thinking, fuck. Waiting to wake up from a bad dream, but I knew it was no dream. In moments like this time is arbitrary. It seemed like a lifetime, but was probably a few minutes. I woke her up and all hell broke loose. I was stunned. She screamed. Her mom ran over and started doing CPR. I knew it was pointless and just wandered around as the complex woke up to see what was going on. Someone called an ambulance and it took him away. We chased it to the hospital where I spent the last few minutes with my child. After we got home CPS or some equivalent showed up and investigated. It was the strangest feeling, my world turned inside out and cops interrogating us. I know it's their job, but they were so heartless. It was par for the course I guess. The world seemed heartless, black and white and I had a crack hangover to boot.

No need to tell you what I was feeling over the next few days. We made funeral arrangements and bought the casket that looked more like a cooler. Friends and family came in from around the country. At the wake was the first time all my family had been in the same room. When we posed for a family picture Stone was feeling out of place and moved off to the side. I told him to get into the picture, we're family. I saw that picture years later and the look on his face is seared into my memory. He was just plain uncomfortable.

Over the next few weeks Ali started to hit the crack pipe with fervor. One day I came home and she wasn't there. I walked into John and Marla's, let myself into their bedroom and there they were hitting the pipe. I grabbed the pipe, took the biggest hit I could and promptly threw up. I was sick to my stomach and completely cured from crack forever. I got into my car and drove. I'm not sure where I ended up, but I remember thinking... I am free. My child died and I wouldn't have to deal with the nightmares Ali and Rhonda had planned for me. I saw my life for what it was and it was time for a change. A few days later Ali confessed she had been screwing Nick's dad the whole time. I got in my car and drove to California. When I got there she called and asked me to come back. I told her I never wanted to see her again. At that moment my childhood ended and with it the first chapter of my life. Puzzle pieces come in all shapes and sizes. For good or bad, a large piece of my puzzle was becoming clearer. I was in a really dark place, but writing poetry helped me sort out the confusion I was feeling.

**I long to bring it back**

How come I stumble
Through a dark enchanted world
Where everything beautiful is black
After the rose has withered and died
I long to bring it back
Everyday seems like suicide
Only living in the dead of night
The kiss of the dead
Never seemed so sweet
I'd rather surrender
Then keep up this fight
How come the blood I see
Reminds me of that rose
Where the light looks like a lie
After the bird fell from the sky
I knew the reason why
I heard the darkness' cold whisper
The mirror of my life cracked
Then I felt a sliver
Before the world went black
How can I swallow a world
That once swallowed me
Where black sings a song of its own
I can only stay down for so long
I died where I'm from
The rose joined me there
Where everything beautiful is black
Before I couldn't care
Now I long to bring it back

**Rivers that I've known**

I know a nice place by a riverside
Somewhere to go when I want to hide
When I'm alone that's when I find
The moving water plays tricks on my mind
It's not very fast or very deep
If I stare long enough it puts me to sleep
A once silent breeze whispers through the trees
The rivers flowing on so carelessly
Then late at night it's good to be alive
In the moonlight clouds float across the sky
With a clear mind I don't need to wonder why
I spend my spare time down by the riverside
With time to contemplate, no force from my fate
The darkness growing late, moments worth the wait
When I look at its face it has no use for hate
Leaving friends it makes on the path it takes
There is no need to cry or to say goodbye
It ends and begins with life somewhere in the sky
It's there to stop and think, maybe take a drink
Maybe kill yourself, if you want to sink
All the faces that it's known, seeds that it's sown
Sometimes all alone, but it keeps on flowing

**What the darkness hides**

There's a part of me in every one
That would rather fight than run
The darkness that your candles hide
The truth that you hate to find
When cheap thrills are not enough
And you've lost your faith in love
You'll find me up in the mountains
That rise like magical fountains

Those that haven't seen my face
Recognize me from their hate
And the dreams they never use
A dire existence, but here for you
It's another pale cold morning
In the distance I see them grinding
Like ants without meaning or purpose
From here it seems so useless

**Darker things**

I slip into the shadows, darkness I become
As I shed my brighter side, we blend into one
Helpless people, tell me where I've been
Where I find my mind, I don't find a friend
Strangers and arch enemies gather round
They will let you in just to bring you down
My patients have been wearing thin
Comparing where I've been to where I am
Maybe I am here to burn the angels down
Lifeless air of confusion that I am bound
Heaven can't help me hold flames of another side
Existing only to spread chaos till now denied
To come with me, just take my hand
I will show you exactly who I am
The shaded side that you call night
Just a shelter deep inside my mind
If you've been crying, hold on to your tears
You're gonna need them, to cry away your fears
Grab an angle as it falls from the sky
Give a sweet caress and a smile as it dies
When it's lifeless, bury it in your heart
If you don't it will rip your world apart
Then you'll be free to run with me
Then I can show you my darker things

There comes a time
Forces that I find
Roads known will fade
To something that I shade
Choices I can't make
Lost in something to say
About a darkened place
About a sacrifice
For my lost self
Starving for self-control
Running around a world
I can never hold
Except the dreams
From some seeds
Of bonds that tie
Before I die
Be forced to say
That the other day
That never came
And yet I slaved
But just couldn't save

**The Harvester** (from a dream)

They call me the runner of the Earth
Halfway between fears, Metalonia
I am the Harvester
Not a show of strength, but of manipulation
And I am much more than a dream
I am what you've been looking for all along
I don't offer anything you don't want
Where there is weakness, I am there
I am much more than a friend
I am the way to your deepest desires
I am the Harvester

Some call me runner of the Earth
I have so much to offer
Your deception makes me stronger
Find a friend in me or find the end
I can't deliver death, only pain
I give you what you want and crush your only friend
I have traveled the universe
Destroyed complete humanities
If you want, then demand it of me
A friend like me is its own reward
Try to leave and I'll take so much more
I am the Harvester
From the shadow of Asoprities
They call me Runner of the Earth
And I am much more than a dream

**Zero to nothing**

In 21 years, from zero to nothing
I'm not mad, but I'm not laughing
Older I get, faster my life's passing
Passing all, know there's no returning
I'm not affected by fear and anxiety
The harder I try, the harder you're laughing
Everything I've done amounts to nothing
Once it seemed that I was something
All the good things slipped through my hands
21 years… am I a man?
I'm always hungry, but never starving
At my soul there is someone carving
With time the pile's surly growing
Learning to live goes without knowing
And I don't laugh anymore…
What is it I am looking for?
How fast I've grown from zero to nothing

**Scraps of my past**

Staring at the ocean that once kept me here
Looking down from the mountain that stood before me
Living in the darkness that held the roots of my fear
Staring at the wall that once stared at me

Now this restless feeling powers my desire
The twisted thoughts, turning in my head
The emotions I lost push me in the fire
The forces that beat me down, made me rise instead

My once broken will, made me stronger
The strangest of days grow much stranger
The longest of nights grow much longer
I may be strange, but I'm no stranger

In a room full of people, I feel alone
Sitting somewhere far away thinking to myself
And I don't recognize this place I call my home
I want to get up and leave or I might as well

All the past's obstacles still remain there
With the scraps of my past and my compassion
I'm not a hateful soul, but I long to care
Childhood fears bringing on my own destruction

**Another day on Earth**

Nothing really to write about
Love for humanity, a life in doubt
Kind of stuff that carries me over nothing
Feel like I have to care about something
Tomorrow will probably bring more of the same
God fearing Christians kneel down and pray
A lunatic swears he has seen Elvis
The young girls have forgot about horses
The valley there is silver, the mountain is gold
The pizza man delivers in the rain and the cold
Put a letter in the mail to anyone that cares
If it found you I am sorry you were there
If I look back to what was yesterday
A little closer to death, just like today
Today the gun shop is having a big sale
Someone's gonna shoot someone, might shot themselves
I can buy them bullets, but can't aim in the wind
A small sense of security, a world where no one wins
Somewhere there's a pharmacy, passing out the pills
Beer cans replace trophies on the window sills
I love to smoke marijuana, lose reality for a while
I might not forget my pain, but I might smile
The evening news doesn't talk of aliens
The government watches what their saying
Trying to stop smoking in public places
While drunk drivers go on erasing
An old man crying somewhere loves his whiskey
Asks himself why they don't even miss me
So it's just another day on Earth
Sure it's confusing, sometimes it even hurts

**The birds**

They are the birds that glide on the wings of the wind
Have been since the beginning, will to the end
Leaves me only one thing left to say
Come let's watch them fly away

Your love is strong, but the one is gone
I was never meant to be lonely man
Sometimes things just end up this way
Nothing we can do, but watch them fly away

I know you said you'd always be there for me
We can gaze into the darkness, we won't see
The things that make life brand new
If I knew I would fly away with you

I can still hear the cry of the violins
Growing more distant, but it never ends
My feelings sink back into my soul
With the memories of the one I loved

The birds are the one we lose in love
Seems one goodbye is never enough
When you lose what you've been looking for
Close your eyes, but don't close the door

Your brain is your brain, but I really need a "your" to hammer my point… The law of averages states "An average man can win sometimes, but he will… "Mood point" wake up doing the same god damned thing over and over again… that's what makes him average. Now let's say Joe Blow is in his element and I am feeling cocky… he could come out on top. The point is… he's counting on it. But one day I will be in my element and he will be feeling cocky… I will be a fair and honest man and will probably have one of two effects. One… change the course of his life forever or two… make absolutely no god damn sense and at least surprise him.

# Part II: Despair, Discovery and Rebirth

## 8

For the better part of the next year I hid myself away and poured my heart into my poetry. Sadly, 90% of it got destroyed by fire. My brother, Hogg, had a chest with all of my most important possessions in a shed in Washington. On a road trip I found out the shed leaked and the chest had molded. I took my favorite notebook with me and planned on returning for the rest. My brother assumed I didn't want the stuff and burned it. That was my second death. In reality I was on a month long road trip with my girlfriend and eighty pound wolf dog in a Honda Civic and just didn't have the room for my stuff. That chest contained the most powerful and rejuvenating stuff I had ever written, aside from this book. Luckily I found a tape with my favorites recorded in my voice. Despair is a powerful emotion. During that year my writing led me to another theory... that there is a time and a place for every emotion. I truly believe this and will do my best to explain it, though I don't fully understand it myself. When you're at the bottom looking up, you are either completely clueless or on the verge of a psychotic breakdown. I was like a feral dog. My friends accepted me, but I could see the apprehension in their eyes. They were all waiting for me to explode. In reality, so was I. Poetry was my safety valve. Oddly enough the years went by without a meltdown. My anger, sadness, loneliness, confusion and despair became my power. I found I had the power to tell someone to "Shut up or I will punch your face in," and get away with it. I became fearless and they could see it in my eyes.

If you're going through some shit who am I to weigh the force behind it? I talked with Stone last night, well, chatted online. It was the first

time in six months and I can't remember the last time we visited. Anyway, he finally got Facebook so he could follow my adventure and see what I have been up to. Stone has been a hard-ass since he realized he could get away with it. His attitude is I am Stone, God of my world and master to those who know me. Well, years of pent up emotion have finally bubble to the surface. He told me he was overwhelmed and didn't know how to deal with it. I guess this kinda proves my point. If you let yourself feel, you would have some background to deal with emotions in the future. Be pissed off, start a fight, cry, whatever, feel... this is life, embrace it. All emotions need a home. They need to see the surface so we can face them, deal with them and learn from them. I believe the sickness of America, and the world for that matter, is suppressed emotion. Men don't cry, don't worry be happy, don't admit weakness and so on... So much shit being taboo and hidden away becomes a cancer.

The child molester never learned to deal with weakness. It's not a discussion parents want to have with a child. With sex being so popular, but so repressed, it breeds perverts. I say kill child molesters, but blame the death on the fact that we don't teach children right from wrong. We have to have sex education classes, because so many parents are too weak to do their job. You had the kid, make sure they are prepared to deal with the world. Make sure they are prepared to deal with their emotions. Don't depend on school and society to teach them right from wrong. That is the blind leading the blind. It just compounds the problem.

Violence works. If you don't like what someone says, beat their ass and they will keep their opinions to themselves. Granted I come from a violent background and I am guilty of excessive force on numerous occasions. Never the less, I think the reason people do stupid shit is because they think they can get away with it. The repercussions are just not real enough. We depend on police too much and they just don't have any power against stupidity. If someone acts like an asshole all the time it is because of one of two reasons. First, they are just such a badass they can do whatever they want or second, no one has knocked their teeth out. Granted, I have knocked out teeth and the person was unmoved by the gesture. I chalk that up to stupidity and the desire to get beat up. Some people just can't be reasoned with.

The jealousy I felt when I knew Ali had been screwing around with a moron the whole time we were together helped me create a model for the kind of woman I don't want. If I see anything that reminds me of her I am gone without explanation. I am sure these types of people don't belong in

my puzzle. This led me to find the total opposite in who would become my partner for sixteen years and eventually my wife and mother of my second child. I guess I just don't have sympathy for stupidity. Take down the guardrails. Let stupid people die, it's good for the gene pool. Stop protecting people from themselves. Sure the drunk that drives off a cliff and takes people with him was an idiot, but so are his passengers for getting in the car. You might argue that sometimes the victims are children and have no choice. I would agree with you. Not long after Baby Micah's death a drunk driver crossed the center line and wiped out Candy while she was pregnant with Danny's child. Her other kid watched her die. Sometimes these things happen and it's a tragedy. The real tragedy was that Danny never got his five minutes alone with that douche bag.

It's a lack of judgment that is to blame. When society expects itself to do the right thing we are in for a rude awakening. I find it insane to think a line painted on a road between two oncoming cars will protect us. The point is we need to feel everything so we will be more sensitive to our effects on others. Repressed emotion is suspect in my opinion, a lack of judgment due to insensitivity. A lack of self-control and the inability of others to stop the drunken ass in the first place is the reality. Get some balls and protect your children... from the world, from themselves, from your inability to connect with them.

In this book I use a lot of references to my drug use. For the record, drugs are bad for you and could cause a lot of problems in your life. But… the preverbal but... I have found out a lot of interesting things about myself using drugs. Aside from using hallucinogenic substances, I am a big fan of marijuana. In my opinion it is natural and the only reason it is illegal is because pharmaceutical companies can't monopolize it. Millions of people are on mood stabilizers, anti-depression drugs and feel better about your-self pills. The fact that pharmaceutical commercials are plastered everywhere proves they need to convince people they are unhappy in order to sell their drugs. Countless people are or have been put behind bars for marijuana, many of them just for personal use. The fact is they know it's a crime and do it anyway. Is it as destructive as alcohol? Not in my opinion. Is it a gateway to harder drugs? No more than coffee, cigarettes or sugar. But right or wrong the facts are millions of people smoke pot and no one dies, there are minimal amounts of crime associated with it and you can grow it in your garden. Do I think it is harmless? No chance. I know the drug world and people will spend money they don't have on it. This is not a discussion on criminality as much as it is about the price for decisions we

make. Do I want my son to grow up and be a pot smoker? No. The children from my generation's brood are surprisingly sober. Why? Because we were lied to so much that we are determined to give them the truth. Repression is not the solution.

Stone's decision to repress his emotions worked for him to a point. I imagine his emotional flood is just a blow out and he will go back to being himself. That is one of the things I love about him. He is true to what he believes and to hell with anyone else's opinion. I am not sure what he loves about me, but I imagine it is the fact that I do whatever the hell I want, when I want. Aside from some sacrifices I have made for love and family, I need the road. I need the loneliness and the uncertainty to keep back the demons and ghosts. In this journey for peace of mind I have ended up in jail, found myself estranged from friends and family and sometimes I wonder how long I can keep it up. I take chances based on experience and most of the time it turns out alright. I question my sanity. Everyone does... or should... at least. I suppose for me the constant need for escape is a form of repression. But, in the end, it's just me out here and I can't hide from myself.

In the same way my despair forced me to reinvent myself, my courage gave me the fortitude to keep trying even after failure. I took my life by the horns and have years of priceless experience to share with the world. During these years I spent a lot of time on the road. Traveling just seems to ease my mind, calm my soul and give me a feeling of contentment. I ended up at Stones house a lot over the years. It is a place of tranquility for me and he never judges. He only offers support and love for my mission. He has always been fertilizer for my dreams. His lack of desire to travel fuels mine. His curiosity about my journeys pushes me further and gives me strength to go beyond. Coming and going over the years I have watched him out grow his little studio at his parents, open a tattoo parlor and evolve to near mythical status. For a self-centered asshole, a lot of people love him. Over the years we always pushed the limits of what is possible. Sitting there in his studio... bored... we just started tattooing. In those early years we became more alike than different. Later, as the years went on we evolved into totally different creatures. We always have the kinship of the same starting point. No one else on this planet can claim the same connection to either of us. We both have awesome, really close friends, lovers and family. But, the bond of rebirth together is unique to just us. With LSD and two super egos we pushed each other into deeper and deeper waters. We forced each other to become something more than we

were. Just as many of my friends only know Stone the story, many of his friend have only heard of Micah. It is strange to meet someone for the first time and they seem to know me.

I have always had a knack for disappearing. Since I was a kid I would be there one minute and gone, for who knows how long, overnight. I've never been one for goodbyes... so I just went, without warning. It seems I was always fleeing... I am always fleeing. What from? I can't say. To where? Further than before, for longer. It is just my way of staying in touch with myself. I like to think I am easily influenced. To keep from becoming like my surroundings I just keep moving. Keep the influences fresh. Evolution needs diversity. I need diversity. I would and still will just show up at Stones, where I have a room, stay for a while and then move on. He is a creature of habit and his world is too monotonous for me. It works for him, I am not criticizing. It's just not for me for too long, anyway. One day he will join me on a trip. I like to think I am exploring the world so we can cream it. I know what he likes and find myself in places he would like, taking pictures to sell the ideas to him.

So there I was bouncing from Stone's to my mom's and back again. When I wasn't binge drinking with Matt and Charlie at their welfare apartment or rock climbing, I would hide out in my room at my moms. While I was busy feeling sorry for myself, my mom was getting sick of it. She told me to get it together or to get out. I did both. Thanks Mom. My brother helped me get a job at his friends' pizza joint. I don't remember why I quit that job, but it was my first step back into the world. It wasn't long before I found myself back at Stones and that was where I saw Lisa. She was the little sister of a school mate and fellow park rat. The last time I saw Lisa she was around twelve, dorky and shy. Now she was sixteen and beautiful. One day I brought her back to Stones and they fell in love. Nearly twenty years later they are still together. It still sucked for me at the time though. A bit butt hurt I went back to California.

## 9

Matt and Charlie lived in section 8 housing and the rent was insanely cheap. I would bounce from my mom's to the apartment with equality. The apartment was a gutter-punks dream. In the morning there would be trails through the beer cans leading to and from the living room, refrigerator and bathroom. Everything else was trash. At one point the back patio was so

full of beer cans you had to be careful when you opened the door. Soon there were climbing holds all over the walls and ceiling. The skid marks from the climbing rubber looked like a videogame. We would drink all night, climb hung-over in the morning, work if we had it and do it again. At one point the sink was full of dirty dishes and there was a film of scum and mold protecting it from stinking. Matt's girlfriend Valerie actually cleaned the apartment one day, a feat never to be repeated. I got a job at Little Caesar's delivering pizza and this gave us pizza as a supplement to the fast-food we were living on. I can remember digging through the back of my car searching for the newest pizza. Sometimes it was days old, but we were climbing and needed food, bon appetite.

After I got the delivery job, I got a dog. I moved to my brother's property outside of town. He had two and a half acres with a chain-link fence that needed defending. There was no power or water. I dug a pit for the outhouse and it had a great view. An Acid connection turned up and I sold and used a lot of LSD. This exploration freed up a lot of energy I was using for self-pity. I went to the Hot Springs every chance I got. I met new people, most of which were naked. It is weird how you might not recognize someone with their clothes on. I partied a lot. I didn't have a tan line for years. Life was shaping up. I went through a few girlfriends. Made and unmade friends and lost one guy named Waggy.

## Case 1: Waggy's dead

One of the curious and dangerous things about the drug world is the addicts you have to deal with. While I don't think LSD is addictive, the fun of it is. With enough determination it is possible to skip through the safety features put in place to keep the user from the source. As a middle management drug dealer, I used friends to get the Acid to the customers. By giving them a good deal, there was still money to be made at the end. But, sometime friends use bad judgment and bring the customers to the source. Not only does this undermine their profit margin, it can be downright annoying.

So there we were, in the desert outside of town, celebrating my friend's birthday. There were four friends, Joker, Albino, Craigy and I, then there was Waggy, and we were all on Acid. My friend's little brother and his crew were selling a majority of the LSD I had and this was a good arrangement. They had come up to get some more, thus earning a mention in the book. They were at the beginning of the story and come back near the

end. I am not really into stereotypes, but if the shoe fits... Waggy was one of those kinda permanently fried characters that give the term "hippie" a negative connotation. He thought it was cool to act like Shaggy from the Scooby Doo cartoon. To me he was just annoying. I had never met the guy before, didn't want to know him and my friends brought him to my house. He asked me for a better deal on the Acid and I said no. Being an idiot he wouldn't accept this answer and kept asking. At one point I was in my camper rolling a fat birthday joint for the birthday boy and Waggy interrupted, rudely, insisting I give him a ridiculously cheap deal on the Acid. I had lost my patience with him and told him if he asked again I was going to punch him in the face. Well, Waggy being the hippie he was, didn't believe I would use violence against him. In a way he was right. While it would have been fun to beat him up and no one would have stopped me, I had a better plan.

My brother's property was on a slightly ascending hill above the town. To the West was a pile of boulders called the Airport Rocks and to the East was a series of rocky barren hills, some would consider mountains. It was about a ten minute walk through head high creosote bushes to get from my house to the base of the hills. Instead of beating Waggy up, I thought it would be more fun to lose him on the mountain. I made the call. It was time for a hike. It was night, the moon was up, it might have been full and you could see really well. We took off at a run. We jumped the six foot chain link fence. I knew the desert and took the lead, only slowing down enough to let Craigy keep up. I thought there were five of us, but Joker turned around when he fell behind, opting to maintain the campfire. Albino, a friend since Jr. High, ended up with Waggy. The mountain was my backyard and I lead the way effortlessly. After a few minutes I stopped to take an account of the situation and realized that Albino and Waggy were on the smaller of two ridges, while Craigy and I were on the larger one. We called out, they called back. Realizing their error they started cussing and arguing. We laughed and taunted them, reminding them of the fat joint I had for the summit.

Not long after that we were at the summit. There is a boulder there that makes a sort of lookout and the slope falls away steeply below. Craigy confided in me that he was afraid of heights, so we spent a bit of time working on this. I had him lie down on his back with his head downhill. I calmly told him he would not fall and in a few minutes he was comfortable with the situation. We smoked the joint, waiting for Albino and Waggy, but they never made it. We eventually made our way back down to the property

expecting Albino and Waggy to be there. They weren't there and it was sometime before Albino showed up, minus Waggy.

When Albino showed up he told a tale of Waggy being bloodied up and doing death defying dances among the boulders. Albino told him he was being stupid and Waggy replied "It's nothing new to me, Bro". Albino said he couldn't watch anymore and headed back to the campfire. We all had a good laugh and joked that Waggy was dead on the mountain. We had lost him and that was my plan. We were really high at this point and everything had a sort of tragic comical feeling. The idea of going looking for him had never come up. We all figured he would eventually show up and we continued with our birthday party. Not long after losing Waggy, Matt, Charlie and Burt showed up. They were sober or at least not on Acid and thought the Waggy situation was out of hand. At their encouragement we loaded up into the truck and the search was on. My opinion was fuck that guy. He got what he had coming to him. Joker, never one to miss an opportunity to throw in his two cents, said "Fuck that little bitch."

To fully appreciate the dynamics of the situation we need a little background information on Burt. This is the same kid that had to be rescued from a cliff the first time I had met him. He was fifteen and his parents had basically given us, the drunk punks, informal custody of him. He was a Little League all-star and we were grooming him to be a fearless rock climber. So there we were in the back of the truck, he heard Joker's comment and asked if there was a girl out there. Joker, being Joker, replied "That's right and when we find her you better be ready to take your turn." This caused Craigy to roll about in a fit of uncontrollable laughter. It caused us all to crack up. Matt and Charlie had heard the comment and asked if they had missed something. Everything was fine. Burt was completely freaked out and we turned the search party into a hunting trip.

I am not sure how long we drove around the desert, but when we started calling out "Here Waggy, Waggy... you little bitch, come out and get what you got coming to you," it's no wonder we never found him. The night went on and it was round and round with Albino's story about blood and "Nothing new to me, Bro." There was a discussion about responsibility and negligence. While the entire situation was funny, it had become a bit serious. But in reality, what could we do? He thought we were going to lynch him. This topic dominated the rest of the night. In the morning everyone left and a bit later the boys showed up to get more Acid. I told them the story and they looked at me like I was crazy. He was probably dead up on the

mountain and I joked, that he had some money if they wanted to try to find him. They were as disturbed as everyone else.

Then it was just me, my thoughts and a bunch of buzzards circling over the last place anyone had seen Waggy. All day I debated searching for him, but in the end I decided I didn't like him enough anyway. That night I started to get a creepy feeling. The ghost of Waggy was getting to me. While I was still laughing, I wasn't comfortable with the legal ramifications of my actions. The next night the creeps built up. I went and stayed at my mom's in town. I was that creeped out.

The days went by and Waggy was still missing. My house had a palpable taint that was just too much to bear. The mantra of "Waggy's dead" circulated through the circles and still no one had heard from him. He was dead on my mountain and it was my fault. Well, it turned out that some tweekers had drugged their toddler and dropped him down a well near my house. I believe that was what I was picking up on when I was alone. Waggy turned up a few weeks later completely cured of his trippy hippie persona. When someone asked him where he went that night all he said was he "had to go on a walk-about." It was about ten miles to town. A walk-about indeed. He never talked about that night as far as I know. The tweekers sobered up and went to the police, admitting to drugging their kid and dropping him in the well. They came out and extracted the child. The universe had righted itself. My home was back to sort of normal, Waggy wasn't dead, yet and no one ever showed up at my house uninvited again.

# 10

At this time I was spending more and more time at the Hot Springs. The natural surroundings, unpredictable characters and the healing waters eased the aches of my body and mind. I'm not sure how many times I've been there, but I remember the first time. I was maybe fourteen years old. My friends and I used to hike up the creek to some cliffs and a deep swimming hole. The highest cliff is almost forty feet high. As kids we would hang out there, swim and soak up the sun. In the height of summer, when the temperature is in the hundreds, the only relief from the heat is water. Deep Creek flows from a reservoir in Big Bear down through a deep canyon, eventually feeding the underground Mojave River. Where the creek meets the river there is a spillway through the backup dam for the lake in Big Bear. My brother, Keith, first took me there when my family was visiting one year.

The cool creek maintains a cooler temperature then the blasting heat of the desert and the deep canyon is shaded in the morning and evening.

Years after that first time to Deep Creek Matt and I were hiking up the creek, rock hopping as we called it, to go camping. We didn't know how far we were going, only that we wanted to go farther than before. We had hiked the creek bed all day and camped in a cave. There were hundreds of mice. They got sand in our pizza and generally drove us nuts. All night I would wake up to Matt screaming and throwing sand at the pests. He was moved more than I was by the mice. Undeterred we vowed to push further. Early the next day we came across the Hot Springs. We had heard of them and knew they were there, but hadn't really considered going there. It just hadn't come up. It blew our minds. The people there were naked. There were pools full of hot water beside a cool creek. We decided it was a perfect place for lunch. As we sat on a rocky cliff above a hot waterfall, a goddess swam into the channel and up to the waterfall. As we sat there entranced, drooling over our sandwiches, she took a shower. At one point she looked up at us and gave us a mischievous grin. Neither of us had blinked the whole time. She was in her early twenties. We were in our early teens. I remember looking at Matt. I don't remember who said it, maybe it was simultaneous, "We're staying here tonight." It was clear we were going no further. Matt has since hiked all the way to lake, but I have never had any desire to go beyond the Springs. I have spent a great deal of my time soaking in those magical waters with people from all over the world. As it turned out, it is more popular globally than it is locally. Needless to say I went there a lot. Anytime I was in the Desert, I was there and eventually became what could be called a local.

The Hot Springs are steeped in lore. Stories about Charlie Manson, parasites in the water and crazy hillbillies wondering around saying the craziest stuff, are but a few. We perpetuated these rumors thinking that less city people would go there. One year Ronnie Bates had disappeared somewhere in the vicinity of the Springs or at least someone found his car in the desert near them. A year or two later someone found some of his bones in the creek bed. We used that information to start a cannibal rumor. To us, it seemed too ridiculous to stick. But, these things take on lives of their own. One day years after most of us had moved away some guy showed up with a gun… for protection from the cannibals. A local named Ed told him it was a joke and the cannibals had moved away. I guess it had gone too far.

On really dark nights people would gather in the big pool and put lit candles in every crack around the pool. A dozen people could fit in it

without touching and it was the natural place for socializing throughout the night. One side of the pool was a ledge with the creek below. The water comes in from a little channel via a small waterfall and flows over a rock retaining wall into smaller pools below. On the other side there is a rocky cliff. When I was younger and tripping I would get people to have a slimy wall climbing competition. There are cracks in the rock with hot water dribbling out, supporting a growth of algae. The idea was to climb up the slimy rock as far as possible. If you fell you landed in the water. Well, as I am likely to do, I took this a bit farther... probably too far. Imagine eight people relaxing in the pool, cocktails in hand and surrounded by candles. The warm water was giving off a mist into the cool night air. The whole scene was perfect... for a random act of chaos. I was standing on top of the slimy rock, fifteen feet above everyone. I had been waiting a while for everyone to be at the sides at the same time... so I could do a cannonball. When the landing zone finally opened up, the splash put out all the candles and washed out everyone's drinks. In the darkness I stayed low in the water and crept into a little cave barely above the water line. The pool was in a panic and no one knew what the hell was going on. It never occurred to anyone that someone might jump off the rock into a tiny five foot deep pool at night. Stone was in the pool with some friends and random tourists feeding into the hysteria.

I had been above the lights for a while and my eyes were adjusted to the darkness. People were trying to find a dry lighter to lite the candles when I found Stone's leg and pulled him under the water. We wrestled for a minute, pretending to be drowning and everyone started to scatter. I imagine it looked like an alligator drowning a zebra. We were practiced in the art of water wrestling and it was quite dramatic. Eventually everything calmed down, people came back to the pool and we never told anyone what we knew. Looking back, we were being terrorists, but we had our reasons.

Besides people breaking bottles, which have caused some nasty gashes, leaving trash behind and carving stupid shit into everything, some kids thought they needed a fire bad enough to cut down a tree. We had met them in a bar in town and they confessed that they had been kicked out of the Springs. At the Springs the story was about the way they put it. They cut a tree down, tried to build a fire that wouldn't burn and then the locals told them they were uninvited. The drag is that there is wood all over the creek bed. You might have to walk a little, but it is there and it's dry. One of the things that make the heat bearable is the shade under those trees. When someone cuts one down it takes a decade or more to get that shade back. I

have never seen a foreigner destroy anything there… it's always people from town or the city. There is nothing sweeter than waking up to a pile of shit on the trail or near your camp. I suppose it's what those shits represent that gets me so heated about garbage and pollution. Everyone that visits the Springs rave about how beautiful they are, but at the end of the day a handful of locals bring garbage bags with them to haul out trash. They replant the trees, pick up broken bottles and remove graffiti. It is aggravating when people notice that there is no garbage and then leave their trash… sometimes they are conscious enough to put it in a bag.

There have been some nasty accidents too. Some girl sliced the bottom of her foot open, bad, on a broken bottle under the water. One guy broke his neck diving in and his friends had to float him all night while someone hiked out to call for a helicopter. People have almost been shot, stabbed and raped. I haven't seen it personally, but it wouldn't surprise me. I have seen hundreds of people slip on the smooth wet rocks. People have had to be beat down for all kinds of crazy reasons. I have seen a lot of people having bad trips. For years the cops would ride horses down early in the morning on weekends and abuse campers. They would handcuff people to trees and leave them there for hours sometimes. Granted there is no camping allowed, but it got kind of brutal for a while.

There was this couple that used to visit from LA. The girl refused to share a pool with anyone but her boyfriend. He would walk up and demand people get out of the pool so his girlfriend could soak. He reasoned that he had hiked in too and had a right to whatever he wanted. I remember looking at him as people were getting out. He couldn't believe I wouldn't get out. There are five other pools that only fit a few people. Why do you need the big one? Dude, you need a hot tub, not hot springs. Granted my stand was a bit selfish, but someone had to do it.

In the end, the Springs are still there, there are more assholes than ever, but it doesn't make it any less magical. Anything is possible there… good and bad… that's the deal. Stone doesn't want to go back and I get that. He has had one too many bad trips. For me, that place is too much a part of me to give up. I have seen twenty thugs from LA come in, menace and destroy, threaten to kill people and shoot the place to shit. On the other hand I have seen a dozen girls dancing in the darkness wearing nothing but glow in the dark paint, singing songs and spreading love. The long hot hike in and the dirt road has kept this place from getting completely overrun. Some friends of the guy that broke his neck were trying to get a road put in so their buddy could get his wheel chair down there. I don't want to think

about there being a road all the way to it. A road anywhere near it and it would be lost to the masses. If you can handle swimming across the frigid creek in the winter you can have the place to yourself sometimes. The two mile hill down seems nice enough till you are tired and hungry, staring up at the trail out. I have seen people in bad shape at 4:00 in the afternoon, 115 degrees, no water… whether drunk, hurt, too old or just out of shape, they weren't prepared and suffered for it. I can't count the times I gave my water away.

I have a blanket rule, or a sleeping bag rule, for visiting the Springs. Never go there without a sleeping bag. The idea is you never know what is going to happen, so it's best to be prepared. The only time I broke this rule, five of us froze our asses off all night. Stone and I were living up in the Village at the time and we had a fifth of Absolute vodka. Our mistake was stopping by Christopher's house before we left. We drank the entire fifth in fifteen minutes and then made a mad dash for the Springs. The girls wanted to bring sleeping bags, but I assured them we would be hiking back out that night. Stone and I were half running, half stumbling down the trail. By the time we got to the Springs we were thoroughly drunk. A soak in the hot water intensified the buzz and it was obvious we were not hiking out. We stayed in the water for hours, but eventually fatigue took over. It was early spring and still near freezing out. The only reason we survived was because of a giant pile of wood washed up on a beach. All night we took turns stoking the fire. First it was too hot, then the fire would die down and we all crept closer. Someone would pile more wood on and we would retreat. Jaime and I had one hoodie between us that we took turns curling up in. Stone and Lisa were curled up with their dog. When the sun came out the next morning my ribs were aching from shivering all night. We ended up burning a few weeks' worth of campfire wood in one night. In the end we survived, we were miserable, but the rule was never broken again.

There is a ranch that you can pay to park at and get direct access to the trail. Don't blow through the gate though. My friend Luke used to run the gate for years and he let some locals go through for free. One night I was by myself and blew through the gate. They knew my van and never hassled me. Well, the owner Mike was there and he chased me down on his dirt bike. The guy can ride and has no problem drawing down on you. He chased me to the parking lot and when I got out I had a Maglite shining in my eyes. Underneath the light was a big ass gun. I reached into my van to get my pack and he started screaming for me to put my hands up. He was squinting at me trying to figure out what I was up to. I thought he knew me

and that everything would be alright once I identified myself. He didn't remember me and I was lucky I didn't get shot. I explained the situation and he told me there were no more free passes. This was cool with me because some locals had just finished a new trail, if you knew the way, for free. There used to be a sweet trailhead that cut off a lot of the trail called Horse Camp. BLM and, some suspect, Mike had fenced off the road to it, forcing people into the ranch. Bowen Ranch has made a living off parking for years. There is a ranch next to it called Moss Mill. They had a feud with Bowen Ranch for years. They used to let people go around Bowen Ranch for free or a beer. The feud escalated into a war right out of hillbilly 101. The story I heard says they shot up each other's water tanks, poured cement down each other's wells and it nearly came to a shootout more than once. For whatever reason, Moss Mill lost access to the trail, or just got sick of whatever was going on. Leaving the sole survivor… Bowen Ranch.

## 11

So there I was living out beyond the city lights and power lines, doing lots of LSD and reinventing myself. Any chance I could, I would go to the Hot Springs. When I wasn't there I would sit outside my trailer and gaze in wonder. The stars were super bright above me in the clear desert sky and the view of the city lights was amazing. At night I had the Ocean of Lights, the shore about five miles from my home. Cutting through this was the River of Life. In reality it was the I-15 freeway connecting LA to Las Vegas, cutting through the city lights of the High Desert. On the weekends it was packed with cars and looked just like a river. On Friday night the lights where white from the headlights and on Sunday they were red from the taillights. I sat for years tripping out, pondering the gravity of such things. My TV was the Ocean of Lights, the River of life, the Sun, the Wind and the Milky Way. I would stare into the night watching satellites blink through the darkness. At some point my friend Deerbone had moved up there... we were camper mates. Eventually I got a twenty foot trailer and this became the mansion and the base of operations for self-exploration. At one point I remember Deerbone and I sitting across from each, out of our minds on Acid, taking turns waving our arms for the visuals. Everything was a big blur and we laughed at how such a simple thing could be so entertaining. We worked, dropped Acid and went to the Hot Springs. It's really hard to feel sorry for yourself with that kind of life.

About this same time Matt and I started rock climbing. The second time I saw Burt and Dave we were trying to climb Elephant Rock. We had homemade harnesses and had the rope wrapped around a rock for belay. So there it was... rock climbing with ropes. A friend of my brother, Duane, was an old school climbing hippie and took me on my first real climb. I was hooked. Some other friends heard that we were climbing and took us rope climbing. We didn't know that they were actually climbing the rope, not the rock. We went to the hardware store and bought a rope and carabineers. This guy Brad saw us using this stuff and gave us an old climbing rope. We learned that the hardware carabineers were super stiff and not really for rock climbing. The hardware store rope didn't stretch and could break your back if you fell too far. We started buying real gear. We had a climbing area not far away and spent more and more time climbing. We even turned the apartment into a climbing gym. We nailed blocks of wood to the wall, and then we bought some holds. We destroyed the apartment with holes in the drywall and skid-marks from the climbing shoes. We pushed each other farther and harder.

As with most things I have never had much mentorship. I decided I wanted to do something and figured it out along the way. Usually I had little to no budget. Rock climbing was one of those things. Despite Duane's bouldering lessons and one technical climbing trip, I was dangerously ignorant. I was brave and enthusiastic. If I could count the times I was in over my head I would overdose on adrenaline just thinking about it. Very few people can say they showed me how to do anything. There is Gary, who taught me carpentry and woodworking. Beyond that it was up to me to find a book or watch others and work it out from there. Rock climbing was one of the things a few of us just figured out. People would see us doing everything wrong and say so. We would learn whatever we could from them and make the corrections. Amazingly we all survived.

Once, Matt and I had gone on a mission to Ridgecrest, at the Southern end of the Sierras. I think we had a climbing guide book, but that was it as far as information goes. We ended up at Fossil Falls. It is a canyon carved out of basalt. Toward the bottom of the canyon the climbs are pushing sixty feet or more. The basalt had been worn away into the craziest bowls. Each one sharing edges with the ones around it. The smooth black rock formed a small canyon floor, getting bigger as you go down. Anyway, Matt and I had leap frogged up an easy route and it was up to me to do the "operation." At the top of most climbs there is a chain or webbing that serves as the top anchor. Once you are done with the climb, someone needs

to go to the top and retrieve the gear. At the top, you need to clip directly into this anchor, untie the rope from your harness, feed it through the anchor, remove whatever gear is there and then retie to the harness. Then you can be lowered via the chains without leaving expensive gear behind. I had done the operation and was ready to let go and be lowered down when one of us noticed I hadn't run the rope through the chains. The climb was slightly overhanging and once I unhook myself from the chain the weight of the rope started pulling my away from the cliff. In my panicked state, my arms and legs were going fast and I was shaking pretty bad. Matt just looked up yelling encouragements while I struggled to save my own life. I still get an adrenaline rush recalling it. I managed to get myself clipped back to the chain and it took me five to ten minutes before I could get the knot untied. I am not sure if I climbed anymore that day.

Less than a year after we started climbing Matt and I thought we were up for our first multi-pitch climb. Being confident, over confident for sure, we chose Tahquitz Rock above the town of Idyllwild, California. The main face of the rock is a thousand feet of slabby granite riddled with cracks. The pioneers of roped climbing charged this area when it was barely thought possible. One of our heroes, Royal Robbins, had done a lot of first accents here in hiking boots, using wooden stakes they hammered into the cracks for protection. We went there with big ideas. While we were fans of the advances in safety, our first big climb had to be done with some measure of style. We set out with minimal gear and nothing mechanical. You see, there are these things called cams. When you pull the trigger, the spring loaded cams compact, you put them into a crack, let go, they expand, give them a tug and you're off. There is a bit more to it than that, but that is the gist of it. Well, we would have none of that. If the pioneers could do it in boots, we could pull it off with minimal gear. We decided to use only nuts.

Not the nuts it took to make the decision, but a simple piece of metal attached to a metal wire. You find a chock or bottle neck in a crack and position the nut so that it wedges into the crack. It would be a bit harder… OK, a lot harder and we had minimal experience with cracks. We learned how to face climb on sport routes. These routes have solid anchors bolted into the rock. You just clip in and climb on. At some point Matt was leading a pitch and fifty feet of anchors came whizzing down the rope, right into my hands. I had to hang on because I was the brake for the rope, responsible for stopping the rope if Matt fell. Without those anchors he would have fallen head over heels into me, knocking both of us off the cliff. Let's just say that passive anchors are a dying style. Safety has superseded

raw adventure. Just climbing is enough adventure for some, without the added danger of questionable protection. But, we decided to walk in the footsteps of our heroes.

From the very beginning we were struggling. On the first pitch I got off route. I only had to follow a crack straight up and managed to blow it. Some guys were waiting for us and when I was off route they decided to climb up and around me. Once they climbed past me they let me use their rope to swing back on to the right line. "Whodunnit" is one of the classic routes in the area and while it is easy, it is big. It starts off slabby, getting steep in the middle with a small overhang near the top. We had leapfrogged up the easy parts and then started to struggle on the vertical parts. We were forever above the ground, had lost faith in our skills at placing anchors and protecting our own lives. Just the scale of the thing had caused us to question our rational. Any fall would be nasty and we were scared. As my luck would have it, Matt's turn to lead came at the overhang. Looking down nearly 800 feet watching Matt climb up to me, I realized I was covered in ants. Someone had spilt a Coke and the ants were everywhere. Forcing Matt to hold on while I fought the ants off my arms and legs had worked him hard right before the hardest part of the climb.

I got the ant situation under control and Matt climbed up to the belay point. He looked at the overhang, looked at me and asked if I wanted to do the pitch. No chance. It was his turn. Get to it. It was getting late, cold and we were out of water. The climb had already taken twice as long as we had planned. Never one to dally around, he took a deep breath, easily climbed to the overhang, took one last look down before he committed himself over the abyss and in ten seconds he was gone. The rope started to pay out faster than ever… then stopped. Our signals were simple… One tug, "Are you there?" One tug back, "Yes." Two tugs… "On belay?" Two tugs back, "Good to go." I tried to pull the rope. Nothing. The rope had too much drag for our signals. I yelled at him… nothing. I tried climbing up a bit to see if he could get the slack… nothing. Forty five minutes later a voice from town yelled up, "He says to fucking climb already!" It turned out that everyone in town could hear us yelling, though we couldn't hear each other. So I climbed. As I leaned over to climb to the overhang I couldn't help but notice the fifteen feet of slack on my end of the rope. Holding my breath, I committed to the overhang. It was pretty easy and as soon as I cleared it the rope started moving.

There was a little more easy climbing before a class three walk off to the top. When I followed the rope up to Matt he was just getting the slack

out of it. He was in a bit of a panic. Once the rope unsnagged from the overhang, he couldn't catch up and started wondering if I was still attached to the other end. Seeing me was like seeing a ghost. The relief was instant. We hugged and were stoked it was over. We were cold, hungry and thirsty, but it was over. We had "Dunnit." It was our first epic. We would take our extreme desires into epic realms again and again.

Rock climbing was an instant obsession. We happened to live in a burgeoning sport climbing area and had no shortage of world class climbers visiting our local spot. Our main problem was that we had to drive for hours to buy climbing gear. Matt's brother Danny decided to help us open a small, short lived climbing shop called "Climbal Urges"... Charlie came up with that one. Right away we realized we weren't climbing if the shop was open. Having minimal funding, we had to work the shop ourselves. To complicate things, all the major gear suppliers had minimum purchases and the biggest ones required us to be open for more than a year. When the funding fell through, we gladly went back to our passions.

We partied all night, woke up hung over, climbed before it got so hot our shoes would melt, ate old pizzas left in the back of my car and were loving life. Eventually everyone was getting so good I couldn't follow. I have really bad joints and arthritis in my fingers. It didn't take long for me to realize I wouldn't be able to climb the harder climbs. One day I was reading a climbing magazine and discovered mountain climbing. It's not that I had never heard of it, I just hadn't thought of it as climbing. I saw guys doing crazy things in impossible places. I wanted to do that. This was a good compromise for me. I loved hiking and could still climb without the focus on technical difficulty. For months I tried to get the boys to take a trip to the Sierras, but all I got was "We should take some lessons or climb San Gergonio," which is a small insignificant peak. I wanted to climb something big. I bid my time hoping someone would want to go with me. Everyone else was having fun climbing rocks.

We were the drunk punks of our climbing community. We didn't take personal safety all that serious. People would cringe and walk away when they saw our antics. One of our jokes was what we called "on belay... mostly." We were drinking and smoking pot while we were climbing and it was common for your partner to tell you to hold on for a second while they got a beer or lit a cigarette. Breaking the first rule of belaying... never let go of the rope. We would skip bolts and were having fun freaking out people visiting from LA. At some point I seem to remember Matt climbing with the rope tied around his neck. It was an easy climb we could do without the

rope, but the drama of it all was irresistible. We had a short lived game we called "Rock Pirates." Two or more people would climb side by side in a sort of competition... the crazy part was there were no rules... imagine hiking into a new spot for the first time and the first thing you see are these long haired stoners swinging across the face of the rock trying to knock each other back down. It didn't last long, but the stories got around. It was the wild west of the climbing world.

One night I had a dream. For months we had been bouldering at the Airport Rocks in Apple Valley. We had this circuit we would run on a regular basis. The workout was more for stamina than for technique and the lack of ropes made it easy to get through a large area fast. The granddaddy challenge of them all was Pocket Rock. Some guys had chiseled pockets and jugs underneath a boulder to create a roof climb. You started sitting down and never got more than a few feet of the ground. six or seven moves got you to the edge where you had to reach out and around an impossible lip. It took a while to work the thing up to the lip, but we couldn't get in position to get past it. We had never seen anyone do it, though we knew it could be done. I had a dream about it and in the dream I had mixed up my moves a bit to get a better position for the lip. In the dream it was easy once I knew the trick. I woke everyone up early, told them about the dream and demanded we go immediately, before I forgot. They were skeptical, but I was adamant. Sure as shit, I finished it easily. We all did. It just became part of the workout, instead of this problem we had to deal with every time we went there.

Once we went to Malibu Creek. It is the place they filmed the original "Planet of the Apes." The rock walls of the canyon are riddled with pockets of all sizes. Standing there looking at it, there are infinite possibilities for climbing. Once your feet are off the ground you realize how deceiving those pockets are. We had a hard time getting off the ground. Most of those pockets are useless. The entire wall is covered in climbing chalk from the thousands of hands searching for something to hold on to. I remember us walking away in frustration. We went to Naja's for yards of beer.

As far as climbers go we didn't take that many trips. The boys have climbed all over the West, but the trips have been spread out over decades. Burt is the most accomplished of us all. He has climbed with some of our heroes doing incredible walls. We used to bust his balls because he couldn't show us any pictures. He would get so pissed off. For me it is awesome to think we had an influence on him. We used to tie him off half way up a climb till he was crying. We would throw rocks at him, pull him down,

whatever we thought of was fair game. He got better than us fast. The boys still go on adventures together every few years.

# 12

One day I collected a hodge-podge of borrowed gear, put my thumb out and headed up to the Owens Valley with dreams of the High Sierra. I landed in Lone Pine at the base of Whitney Portal. Mount Whitney is the tallest mountain in the States outside of Alaska. From the town of Lone Pine, it looms like a giant. The east face of Whitney is a big cliff and there are a bunch of spires connected to it that are equally amazing. The entire Eastern side of the Sierras overlooks the Owens Valley and is clearly visible from highway 395. There are countless jagged rock peaks and though I had seen them before, they were completely new to me. They were right there in front of me and I wanted to look down from the top.

It was the 4th of July weekend and there was a festival going on in the city park. It was there that I met Andrew. He was super gay and had super fucked up gay-dar. He must have been in love, because he said he would take me climbing on a 14,000 foot peak. He took me home and we plotted our adventure. He had this sweet cabin at the base of Mount Lone Pine. He was a vegan and made this weird grain stuff for dinner and then went to his room to do yoga. He invited me, but I declined. He had been hitting on me, but I didn't care... we were going climbing. He had these really old packs made of denim. They were the original prototypes for what is now Jandd sporting goods, at least I think it is Jandd. I know the company was successful. He also had all the gear we would need for our climb. His gear was half the weight of the ghetto gear I had borrowed. Going over the gear that night he had decided we wouldn't need the crampons... Oops.

The next day we headed up into the High Sierra to climb my first mountain. It happened to be Mount Tyndall, one of the smallest of the 14's at 14,026 feet. We went up the Shepherd's Pass. This trail starts lower in elevation than most, but it gets you sweet access to the Central Sierra. We left in the afternoon and made camp early the first night. The second day we hiked through the "pot hole." You hike up a fairly steep trail from 6,000 feet up to 10,500. Then you drop down five hundred feet and climb up to 12,500. We made the saddle of the pass in the early afternoon. We decided to bag Mount Tyndall that afternoon. We climbed a route called the North Rib. It was a narrow bit of rock with snow on both sides. The top was

covered in snow. We could have hiked up the back, but I wanted to climb and pushed for the slightly more technical route. Well, everything was going fine till the snow turned out to be ice. I had to chip steps into the ice with my ice axe, because we left the crampons behind. As I got more comfortable my steps got smaller and smaller. Soon Andrew started to panic. He was a backpacker, not an alpinist. I can remember him yelling at me to make the steps bigger, and then he froze. He had a look of terror on his face. He wanted to go down... he got scared... he started scrabbling toward me in a panic. He was out of his mind and I knew he just wanted something to hold onto. The problem was I was the only thing to hold onto. I held out my ice-axe and told him if he came any closer I would hit him in the face with it. This snapped him out of his panic. He calmed down and regained his composure. We finished the climb and at the top he asked if he could blow me. I told him if I could throw him off the mountain, sure. He asked, "Before or after?" It was lame that was his end game. We didn't climb anything else. We were considering Mount Williamson, which was right next to us. The episode on Tyndall left a pall over everything that came after. We could have climbed Williamson before lunch and still made it out the same day.

On the way back down the mountain I found out he had blown off a date to climb with me and it was obvious I was not welcome anymore. I was equally disgusted, but before we parted ways I traded a carabineer for a few hits of Acid he had. Back in LA he was a rave organizer and claimed the Acid was some of the best. He had also told me about the hot spring at the pink church and the mother-lode of the Eastern Sierra. The Owens Valley is littered with springs and there is even a hot creek. After every climb from then on I would stop and soak off the pain in a hot tub size pool in the middle of a pasture. But for now I had climbed my first mountain and it was addictive.

I came back successful and I was ready to go again. I tried to get someone to go with me, but it would be a while before someone actually did. So I went alone. I threw myself at the mountains. I bagged all but three of the 14's. The last being a technical climb that without an alpine partner was just too much for me. Another was right next to it and I always thought it would be cool to traverse to that peak from the top of the other. The last is a long class three scramble.

My time in the High Sierra was a proving ground for me. I found that I had a ridiculous amount of stamina. I proved to myself that I could do anything. My confidence built over those years and the solitude of the

mountains was medicine for my soul. Around this time my Grandma gave me her old car, a 1986 Mercury station wagon. I had a job delivering pizzas and enrolled in college. All the while, I was feeding my mountain climbing jones. I used my Pell grants to buy high end gear. I climbed every couple of weeks during the summer. Then winter came. I was going crazy for months. Out of desperation I tried an early season accent. It was the first time I tasted defeat.

I drove into Whitney portal and there was so much snow I couldn't drive all the way to the trailhead. Undaunted, I just started hiking from there. About two hours into the climb the sun came out and turned the snow into slush. I snow-shoed onward and upward. I fell through the snow into a creek and got completely soaked. An hour later the snow just wouldn't support my weight and I found myself in a giant hole. The more I struggled to get out, the bigger the hole got. After all was said and done, my hole was eight feet deep and twelve feet wide with a trench twenty feet long leading to a boulder. I climbed up on to this boulder and waited for the sun to go behind the mountains so the snow would refreeze and support my weight. I can only imagine what the next guy thought when he saw that hole. I drove home in the dark defeated, but smarter.

1-22-13 6:45 pm Huascaran National Park, Peru. Santa Cruz Trek

Well, just over five miles today to first camp. Almost a thousand meters of elevation gain. It's cold, the sun just went down and the temperature plummeted. Wish I had my four season Trango tent, but wishes... It was a pretty tiring day. We are over 12,000 feet and in the distance we saw our first glaciers. Tomorrow we will hike into a nest of them. The clouds have obscured the summits of the peaks they belong to. The guy I am hiking with is insane. No rain gear, no sleeping bag, old sneakers and only my day pack. We will have to wait and see how he fairs tonight. He lives in Pittsburg. When I told him it was idiotic and asked him if he would sleep outside in PA without a sleeping bag, he said there wasn't two feet of snow on the ground. I agreed, but then I mentioned that there are 633 glaciers up here. We followed a river all day. The first two and a half hours were really steep. But it had flattened out for the rest of the day. Two packs of cigarettes a day is taking its toll. I am exhausted. Tomorrow is another long stretch of flat and will give us a chance to get our legs under us. There have been some pretty cool rock formations and spires, but nothing I haven't seen before. The real deal starts tomorrow. The national park has

thirty three peaks over 20,000 feet. It is super accessible and a mecca for alpinists from all over the world. I want to do a peak, but my money is too low for comfort as it is. The Santa Cruz Trek is a four day, fifty kilometer trek through the heart of it. We wanted to start from the other side, but missed the morning collectivo. So we went ahead and did it backwards. A lot of people do it this way, the main challenge is a 4700 meter (over 15,000 feet) pass and we will have to do it on day three instead of day two, when we are a bit more beat down. I am curious how the night will go for my brave, but not so smart partner.

1-24-13 Huaraz, Peru

Well, the hike is done. Shoham made it without rain gear or a sleeping bag without a complaint. We decided to skip day three and push over the pass on day two. Tough stuff, but it paid off. The views were incredible. Huge peaks covered in glaciers. It rained pretty hard that morning, but then it dried out in the afternoon. Shoham was in sneakers, he's hardcore. Nothing but respect for him. There was a huge avalanche across the trail that filled in a lake and diverted the river. Just couldn't get over the power of Mother Nature. The last few hours of the hike was a steep donkey trail up to the road. We made it with two minutes to spare before the bus came. Then we went down the most ridiculous road ever made. The switchbacks were so tight the bus had to back up to complete the turns. It took us over an hour to crawl down the mountainside. Four hours of dirt road and incredible views. Lots of time to think on the hike and I decided to charge on to Chile. Summer is winding down, as is my money. Gonna skip the rest of Peru. Six weeks is plenty of time here. I will definitely be coming back to do some serious climbing. This hike has reignited my passion for alpinism. Made a personal high, 15,500 feet and I was just hiking. My previous high was just short of 14,500 feet on Mount Whitney. I decided I need to be near my son, so I will head back to the States in a few months. Unless something incredible happens and I can fly him and Jaime down here for visits.

The road outside my hostel is closed on one end, not sure why, it looks finished. Anyway, it has turned into the concrete soccer field every night I have been here. Man, can these guys ball!!!

# 13

After the climb with Andrew I continued to the North. At the junction in Lee Vining I got picked up by a guy with a bass boat. He had gotten into a fight with his wife the night before their vacation to Yosemite. He had charged on without his family. That day we had taken his boat to Bass Lake to go fishing, but his boat wouldn't start. In frustration, we loaded his boat back up and continued on to the Yosemite Valley where he had a week long reservation at a prepaid campsite. It was the height of the tourist season and it was completely packed. The valley had a ceiling of smoke from all the campfires. We set up camp in the evening, had dinner and hung out and talked. I gave him a bit of the climbing history of the valley and we went to bed. In the morning he packed up his stuff and left.

So there I was in the most coveted National park with a week-long prepaid campsite. You have to wait for years to get a site. I spent the morning strolling around the valley. I checked out Sunshine Camp or Camp 4 as it's known to climbers. It is the climber's camp and legends have been made there. I hiked to the base of El Capitan and by lunch I was thoroughly disgusted with the tourist madness. I returned to my camp to find some hippies asking if they could share my site. I told them, "Hell, you can have it." They just stood there wondering what the catch was as I packed up my stuff and left. At the time, like now, I just wasn't into crowds and needed to find somewhere tranquil. I left the valley headed back towards Lee Vining and ended up camping near Tuolumne Meadows on the side of the road with a view of Half Dome.

The next morning I was up with the sun, hit the road and in the evening found myself hiking through Susanville. It was hot and I was tired. At the end of town the road got really narrow and winding. There was hardly room to walk, let alone hitchhike, so I just kept hiking. Suddenly, an old Ranchero stopped and the guys inside told me to hop in the back... fast. It turned out they were a bunch of fire fighters waiting for a fire to fight. They took me a little ways up the road and turned onto a forest service road. They got out and asked me where I was going. I told them I just wanted a place to crash for the night. They looked at each other and invited me to their camp. That night is one of my favorite stories and as hard as it is to believe... this shit really happened.

**Case 2: The Sasquatch Mating Ritual**

We rolled into their camp, which was more like a Boy Scout camp, than a fire fighter camp. The evening was fast approaching, but it was still a beautiful day. We started chatting and I filled them in on my adventure up till then. After the getting to know this hitchhiker who was now staying with them in their camp, they began to fill me in on what was happening in their neck of the woods. You see, back in Susanville there is this place called the Blue House. I remember walking past it on my way into town, but more than that I remember thinking that is a lot of black dudes living in one house. Anyway, the guys started talking about the Blue House and how some of the guys from their camp, and some of these guys' girlfriends, went there and hadn't returned. Some of the guys were upset and didn't know what to do about it. I don't remember them calling it a crack house, but that was the impression I got. The camp was a mix of black and white guys. I remember two of the black guys clearly. The first, because he was afraid of the dark, the woods and the sky, I imagine. The guys were teasing him by making cougar noises and he was genuinely disturbed by them. He was jumpy and his fear was palpable. He was waiting for his Aunt to come get him so he could sleep in town. The second guy… well, let's say he made an unforgettable impression.

It wasn't long before this convertible Cadillac Coup De Ville pulled into camp. The older lady that got out looked right into my eyes and said, "I thought you'd be here. Look here, Micah, after what you've been through, you need a party." I was shocked. One of the guys must have told her my name, but I never told anybody "what I'd been through." She looked around the camp and asked us what we wanted. Everyone was waiting for me to say something, it was my party after all. I told her a steak would be nice, kind of joking. She replied "Done, anything else?" I said "Beer?" "Anything else… anyone?" The other black guy, Sheldon, piped up suddenly "Pussy, I'd like some pussy." Everyone laughed. No one had a clue what was going on, but it looked like a good time was shaping up. She got into her car, started it up and was gone. We were just looking at each other. I suppose they were looking at me. The scared black kid asked me how I knew her and I told him I didn't. They were joking around that we were tricking them. I was as confused as they were.

The subject returned to the kid's fear of the woods. I told him the only way to overcome his fear was to go out and kill a cougar. The other guys went with it and a white guy pulled out a big ass sword and asked "Who

wants to go for a hike?" I had just finished setting up a simple camp and remembered the Acid Andrew gave me. This seemed like destiny and I dropped it as I was catching up to the troop of hunters. We hiked around the woods as it slowly got darker. The black kid started confessing his fears. One of the Boy Scouts started in with the cougar screams again. The kid started to unravel and everyone was laughing on him. We returned to camp just as the Cadillac pulled in loaded with food, beer and lanterns. To my amazement there was a girl in the car. She was Native American mixed with something else, over six feet tall and she had a really husky voice. Sheldon was a really big black guy, at least 6' 4". The girl was obviously for him. He didn't waste any time. Next thing I remember he was holding her hand and gently rubbing it. He was whispering stuff into her ear and it appeared she was eating it up. The lady told the boys to unload the car and to get the coals going.

It turned out that the lady was from the South somewhere and had married the perennial mayor of Susanville. We drank ice cold beer, ate peppered steaks complete with potato salad, corn on the cob and big bags of chips. Life was good. She told me that I have an important mission in the world and not to worry, everything would be fine. Everyone had forgotten about the Blue House and the guys were looking at me like I was the messiah. This was the same time the Acid really started kicking in. Everyone was getting a good buzz. Sheldon now had the Sasquatch woman in his tent. The door was open and he was still whispering in her ear. She was giggling. The next time I looked over at their tent they were both crying. I just remember the husky voice crying "I just don't want to get hurt." Sheldon was stroking her hair saying "I know baby, I know." I was tripping my ass off.

Everyone was stuffed to the gills, pounding beers, someone started a fire and then suddenly I was the center of attention. At some point, I said something about searching for God, so I could kill him. It was a joke, but the mood had darkened and I was rambling about my beliefs and theories. Sometime late into the night the lady looked at me and made a crucifix with her fingers. She got up and backed away from me saying "Get back Satan. You fooled me again." When I do Acid my pupils get huge and I've been told I look sinister. The lady was keyed in on this, along with my opinions on God and just flipped out. Everyone was drunk but me, because I was on acid. She stumbled away and right before she climbed into the tent she looked right at me. She made the cross thing again and said "Get back Satan, I know you." Then she disappeared into the tent. Like clockwork Sheldon

and the Sasquatch climbed out of the tent all smiles. They looked around and from the disturbed look on everyone faces, they knew they had missed something.

The moon was climbing up through the trees full and bright. I remember lying on my sleeping pad watching the backlit clouds fly by at a million miles an hour. The raver Acid was incredible. The camp dozed off and I lay for hours watching the moon pass over head. The patchy glowing clouds drifted by like a dream. The next thing I knew the camp was in frenzy and people were running around in circles in a panic. It turned out they had a 6:00 am fire drill of some sort and were late. I rolled up my stuff and loaded my pack just as the Ranchero was about to pull out. I jumped in the back and they dropped me off at the highway with dumbfounded looks on their faces. Then they were gone. Five minutes later a truck stopped and like that it was over.

As crazy as that night was I still giggle when I lay in bed at night nearly twenty years later. The whole thing, how it started in a flash, Sheldon and the Sasquatch, the feast, me turning from a savior into Satan, the clouds and the morning rush that broke the spell are still etched into my memory. Looking back on that night I just say to myself, "Man, Andrew that was some great LSD." Thanks.

# 14

That truck took me up to Crater Lake. I spent a few days hiking and camping around the lake. The crystal clear water and the mountain air created a perfect place to chill and reflect on everything that had happened to me since I decided to hitchhike up the 395 in search of adventure. In some way I had been profoundly moved. I had found a lot of new puzzle pieces. Now I had to figure out what to do with what I had learned. My mind was spinning more than its usual absurd pace. I figured I would just roll with it and soon I found myself in Tacoma, at a pay phone calling Kat for a ride. I hung out with my little brothers and Dad. It wasn't long before I found myself at Stones wielding crazy tales and spinning minds. We did some tattooing and expanded our minds, reviewed everything we'd experience since our last visit, discussed where we were going and what we'd do when we got there.

At some point Stone procured a steady supply of Acid and we were off to the races. I'm not sure how much Acid I have done. It's somewhere

over thousands of hits, and easily hundreds of trips. There was a time I was taking ten hits at a time. That is about ten times as much as you need. Generally, my rule is five hits just to make sure you get where you're going. The way I see it is, if you are going to commit the time to an endeavor, get the most out of it. At this point my life was consumed by LSD. I was selling it and using it on a regular basis for years at a time.

First of all, I need to discuss LSD. In my mind it is misunderstood. It is not a toy, though we treat it like one. It is a tool, a key to parts of your brain that can be extremely elusive. Most people are unfamiliar with the substance. A lot of what you may know is from glamorized sources and generally out of proportion. In my opinion it is not for the general population. While people die on the drug, it's rarely from homicide, usually it is from stupidity. Note: Stupid people should not take drugs of any sort… it will end badly. In all my times using Acid I have never been out of control. I've made questionable decisions for sure, but everyone survived for better or worse. This is not a story about LSD use. This is the story of my journey. It just so happens that I used a lot of Acid for a large portion of it. Lots of people have used more and I am not making any claims of mastery. I am not an LSD advocate. While it is fun, you may not be the right person or in the right state mind for the trip. When used in excess you are taking a journey. It might lead to a dark place. My thought is just roll with it. If it is good clean LSD you'll be fine. If it is some homemade concoction… who knows what you're taking.

For me it is a shortcut to a gateway. Yogis have been meditating for millennia to achieve a state now possible instantly thanks to modern chemistry. Shamans and other mystics use other substances to achieve this state. I'm not really trying to achieve anything while using Acid. I am just going with it and maybe, hoping to have sex. That's a trip. I have achieved some extremely mysterious states though. I've found lots of answers and even more questions. I have seen the fragile eggshell mind. Care must be taken not to crack reality permanently. We've all seen some weirdo on the street and everyone says he took too much Acid. While it's nothing to be afraid of, you need respect for it. Shortcuts being what they are, you may get "there" unprepared. But what the hell… if you're curious, go for it. It has changed my life a bunch of times.

I have seen some crazy shit while under the influence of Acid. Some examples… I watched my friend Dell stand in the snow barefoot and melt the snow down to the pavement. At one point we were concerned his feet were freezing. He gave us one of his feet and it was warm. It was wet, but

warm. It was freezing out. Another time a group of us went to Rainbow Valley. My girlfriend Candy's little brother got stung by a bee. He was allergic and started to swell up. We were all way too high to take him to the hospital. Me, thinking on my feet, I decided to give him some Acid. I know what you're thinking... negligence is becoming a theme. But... wait to judge. Soon he was tripping and forgot about the bee sting and it went away. I have seen Gene Simons in the wood grain of a shitty trailer's paneling. For some reason I was staring at a knot and everything was moving. I couldn't focus on the actual wood grain. I put my mind to controlling the visuals and then there it was... Gene Simons. No one had noticed it before. But once you saw it, it was there, sober or not.

Once I saw a fish swim down a board I was sanding. I was sober. The crew I worked with was making the trim for a house we built and there were a few of us standing there sanding when it happened. A fish about twelve inches long swam under my sander and down to the end of the board. I could only see the top fin and the top of the tail. But I saw it. I had stopped sanding and by boss Gary looked at me. I hadn't noticed him yet. I was just standing there amazed. This was my first flashback. Then it happened again. It startled me. I looked up and everyone was staring at me. I asked excitedly "Did you guys see that?" Gary asked if I was OK, maybe I needed a break? I walked away for a minute, felt fine, went back to work and had a smile on my face the rest of the day.

In the spirit of seeing things, I was staring at the full moon and the man on the moon became Jimi Hendrix. It's a head shot with his bandana and he's looking down like he's playing a guitar solo. Once I saw it I have always seen it. I've tried to point it out to others, but I think I am the only one that sees it. You see, things are different in the LSD laden mind.

While I find Acid enlightening and even fun, it has its drawbacks. In an altered state the levels of perception are insanely enhanced. In my own experience I have pondered things that were otherwise out of reach and things I've learned were hard to integrate. You must consider that once you know something, it can be very difficult to carry on with life in the same fashion. For whatever reason, LSD has led me to contemplate God, the lack of a God, that God is everywhere and that I am God. I have seen people freak out thinking they are God. I have also seen people changed by finding themselves alone in their minds for the first time. The mind is cavernous and what you find in there can be disturbing.

The second time I saw God was at Rainbow Valley. It is a wildlife refuge most of the year, but four weekends a year it is a twenty-four hour,

hippy trippy, do what you want, but no alcohol, party. Thousands of people attend and there is no shortage of weirdness. On this visit, one of many as I was growing up, I was in my mid-twenties on a road trip with Joker and Jaime. We went to Stones to get some ink and The Rainbow was happening on our way back, so we stopped by. We were up early in the morning. It may not have been that early, but everyone was partying all night, so it seemed early. That's when we heard the crazy screams. The bodiless voice echoed across the valley. It was clearly out of its mind. It screamed "I am God. Ha ha ha… I can kill all you motherfuckers… I'm God!!!" Lucky we were on the other side of the valley. God was about to go on a rampage. This went on for a few minutes. But, mysteriously, it got quiet and an eerie silence hung over the valley.

A little while later we went on a mission to get water. There is a spicket near the gate house and we were walking up to it when we saw God. He wasn't lying. He probably could have killed every one of us. He was buff, black and pissed off. He could have played in the NFL. He was working hard at his escape, oblivious to the gawkers come to see God. He was tied to a water bottle, though his hands were duct taped behind his back. There was a hippy kid babysitting him. The bound guy asked the kid to loosen the tape a little. The kid looked at us. "So… that must be God." He nodded. "How did they catch him?" "Plastic wrap." It's a good idea to keep plastic wrap and duct tape on hand for cases like this. We filled our water bottles and walked away contemplating the task of untying a gorilla of a human being after a bad trip and captivity. Then we ate some Shrooms, played football in the mud and lost because of a crack-head.

Another God themed experience happened at the Hot Springs in the Desert. Some Aussie guy gave me a bag of Salvia Divinorum or diviners' sage. It was a concentrated oil extract of a natural hallucinogenic herb and the trip lasts less than five minutes. He must have had a bad trip, because he hung out until it was time to try it. Then he was gone… I bet he was watching from a nice safe vantage point. I didn't have a pipe, but this local Hot Spring bum/drunk/slow/not sure what guy was game and had one. I loaded a bowl, took a huge puff and fell off the earth… for about a minute. Then I was disorientated for bit. I kinda saw white, then gravity shifted and it was over. I still had a weird, you just got your brain fuct feeling, but I was mostly normal. Then it was Frank's turn. He took a monster puff, held it in a long time, looked around for a bit, looked up and said "Oh? OK, I hear you." He listened, nodding in agreement. He came around and asked me if I heard that. "Heard what?" I asked, wondering what he was tripping on. He

looked right at me as if disbelief that I didn't understand and calmly said, "God. God was talking to me. You couldn't hear that?" "Uh… no…What did God have to say?" With a kind of peace you don't see very often, he replied, "It's cool. Everything is cool." Ya, Frank… "OK…" He still talks about God talking to him a decade later. Who knows? Maybe everything is cool…

**Case 3: God and the Devil**

During high school, or what passed as high school, I was in my second year of ninth grade at a Jr. High with ninth grade. Anyway, it was summer and I found myself spending a lot of time in Puyallup, Washington. I was sixteen, had a nineteen year old nympho girlfriend and a group of adults that I basically lived with for the summer. They lived in some brick shacks on the railroad tracks that shook apart every forty-five minutes. Somewhere along the line my friend met this grower with a bunch of weed. He must have been desperate because we gave him less money every time over a month. It was overpriced to begin with and we were young. We were supposed to sell it, but we were smoking most of it. We'll make it up next time… right… One day I met these guys rolling around the country selling Acid. I arranged a weed for grill deal. The idea was to make up the weed debt with Acid that brought a better price. Puyallup is a suburb of Tacoma and I arranged the meeting at a park near a major freeway interchange between the two cities. At the allotted time, my buddy Cassidy and I, set out to make the exchange.

Well, we were late and the guys had left. How many times had they heard the "I'll meet you at 4:00 story?" So, there we were standing in this park under the freeway, when we heard a horn honking. We looked up at the overpass and the dudes were waving. They circled back around. We climbed in and everyone was stoked. Next thing I knew the deal was done. We smoked some weed and they dosed us with liquid. I was no stranger to the drug and Cassidy said he had done it before. Well, he lied. When they gave him a mouth full of LSD… I was thinking YEE HA. We jumped out of the car and waved them off. The idea was to jump the fence and use the freeway to get back to the party before we started tripping really hard. Within ten minutes the situation took a twisted turn.

To set up the situation, there we were. I had long dark brown hair, a black leather jacket, a black tee-shirt, black 501's and black shoes. Cassidy for his part was dirty blonde. He was wearing black stonewashed jeans and

jacket and white shoes and shirt. We were hitchhiking down the freeway, the Acid coming on faster than anticipated. Cassidy looked at me terrified and mumbled "I'm white and you're black". Within a few moments he leaped straight to "Oh no, I'm God and you're the Devil!" He repeated this a few times while he tried to process it, then broke into tears and took off running down the freeway. At that point we were on the shoulder, but he was losing his mind to the terror and seemed completely unpredictable. At first I was thinking... "What the fuck ever dude, good luck. I have a sheet of Acid in my pocket and this is a bust."

Responsibility is a bitch. On one hand I needed to complete my mission. I had a houseful of people waiting for me and they expected me back in an hour. We were forty-five minutes into the trip and less than a mile away from the house. On the other hand Cassidy was freaking out and it was kinda my fault. When you distribute LSD in a liquid form it is real easy to do what is called puddling. Puddling is when you get so much liquid it is dripping down your face. Sometimes this is intentional, sometimes accidental. The guys with the Acid were stoked and hooked us up. We both got puddled. We got like five to ten times more than the usual dosage. The guy that did it just said "Whoops... good luck... have fun."

I was standing there on the freeway debating abandoning Cassidy. Reason won out and I couldn't leave him in the wilderness. In disgust, I gave chase. He looked back, saw me coming up fast and redoubled his effort at escape. He was scared and crying and I was pissed off. Finally, I yelled at God to stop and he did. As long as I didn't move, he stayed put. I moved forward and he moved away. To complicate the issue, he was crossing the white line into traffic, completely oblivious to the danger. I pleaded for him to stop and get out of the freeway, "Take some deep breathes and listen to me." I promised not to advance and he calmed down a bit. Thinking of a way to get the situation under control I went into a God needn't fear the Devil speech. He started coming around a bit. He was still scared, but I had moved right up to him and we were just talking. In an instant the terror returned and I slapped him hard as I could in the face. In fact, I broke his glasses.

"This is good." I was thinking. He had forgotten about God and the Devil and was now crying about his parents being pissed when they find out about his glasses. At least he had a foot back in reality and I convinced him to get off the freeway. We jumped back over the fence and I walked him home. It took four hours. He was as freaked out about going home on Acid as I was about letting him, but I still had to get back to the house on the

tracks. Cassidy wasn't allowed to play with me anymore. Late into the night I made it back to the house to everyone's relief. Cassidy's house was only a few blocks from my parents, but I have always been a slave to responsibility. I don't remember the trip back to Puyallup. I do remember showing up high as a kite. I told them the story and we all laughed. I don't recall what happened to that sheet of Acid.

# 15

2-2-13... Groundhog Day, Copiapo, Chile

A day of firsts... First time I've seen a family having a picnic twenty feet from a dead dog. First time I drank wine from a melon with two guys that were obviously in love and afraid what I would think. It's also my first day I've wondered around in Chile. It's been pretty fucking weird. The dead dog was strange, the gay guys were weirder, but weirdest of all is the guy watching Star Trek next to me. I was at this internet cafe four hours ago and he was watching the first one... now I am not sure where he's at, but he is definitely on a mission. I can respect that. Fact... people should not live in the desert... too much sun makes you weird. I have been trying to get out of this desert for days and it seems it never ends. I picked a place on the map because it seemed central to my mission... Seems it is central to everyone's mission. For the record, avoid Copiapo unless you are going to burn in San Pedro de Atacama. I did find a decent Peña, which is a local bar, and managed a good buzz, but after that... hours of listless wondering. I searched for another internet cafe only to be led in circles. Hours later I ended up at the one I started at. My first day was pretty much a waste of life. Not sure what all these people are doing here. Usually I can follow the crowd and it leads me somewhere... This crowd was different. They seemed to be wondering around in circles just like me. My feet hurt and I feel sorry for the person sitting next to me tonight. I am taking an overnight bus to Santiago and I am sure my feet are gonna stink... bad. But hey, at least I don't have gas... anymore... the Chilean BBQ definitely did something to my innards...

One more night and I will be in the most polluted city in the world. The next day I will still be there. But hey, they have a swim up bar... don't have to get out to go piss... I guess. So far the jury is still out on Chile. It is nothing like I imagined. Kinda like Mexico is to the States. I am hoping as I go south it will become something different. Trying not to

project, but this place is pretty lame. Shit loads of tourists with nothing to do. That goes for me too. Luckily my bus leaves in a few hours. This is just an attempt to pass the time and fill you in on what's happening right now. I was wondering around and met some guy at a store. He bought wine and I bought rum... We went to his hostel and his boyfriend was kinda jealous. After drinking wine from a honeydew melon... all the while I was sipping rum... the first guy wanted to kiss his buddy. The other guy wasn't cool with me being there. I really couldn't have cared less... I was over the weirdness and waiting for an out. Luckily, one got a phone call, the other used the bathroom and I split. Then I saw a family having a picnic... then I saw the dead dog... no one seemed to notice, or at least no one wanted to ruin their family outing by acknowledging a dead dog next to them... in the main plaza... of a tourist trap. Strange days indeed... my watch's date is a day fast... really fucking with me... Casio sucks in my opinion. Unless they hook me up fat, I will attest to that.

So the land of 10,000 mines and the place of the War for the Pacific is pretty much a wasteland. When they ask me what I think about Chile, I say I just got here. The Peruvians and Chileans have a nationalist beef that goes back a century. So far they are pretty much the same... I wouldn't tell them that, but most of them can't understand proper Spanish anyway. They just look at me... all dull... huh? I repeat in slow motion and they just tune out. It's cool, I am probably better off without their help, as honest as it seems. If for some reason you follow in my footsteps... fly to Santiago and save yourself some brain cells.

So back when I was up in Washington, Stone had just gotten divorced and he had opened up a proper tattoo studio. We hung out, he tattooed and I wrote poetry. Soon the walls were covered with pages of my work. It gave people something to do while they sat around waiting. We formed a small group and pondered our place the universe. We were young, strong and brave. We were picking ourselves up from the poundings life was doling out. We pushed everything and everyone to the brink of collapse. Stone took classes in body modification. He came back and everyone was ready to be modified. We were tattooed, branded, scarred and pierced. We wanted more. It was a different trip for sure, but it was interesting to say the least.

Everyone wanted to be the most hardcore. I was the first head tattoo of many. But, there was Allen. He out did all of us. He is what I consider hardcore. He had Stone carve, yes with a scalpel, a runic clover in his chest.

It was insane. The carving seemed to go on forever. Allen was cringing, we all were cringing. The blood was flowing into puddles. If that's not enough, after the initial carving they rubbed sand and ashes into it. The idea was to damage the tissue so much that it couldn't possible heal over. Allen also went on to get a complicated knot work piece on his dome. I wasn't there, but from the picture it took a long ass time.

At the tattoo parlor I had created an alter personality. I spoke in a kind of Bobcat Goldwick grunt and claimed I was normal. Except for the fact that I drowneded when I was a kid and had to be resuscitated. People would think it was a joke. But after weeks around tons of people, I could stay in character full time. Then people weren't so sure it was a joke. I would say the most twisted things and people would just laugh. I would randomly yell out "Fire. People burn... if you get them hot enough." People just didn't know what to think. That led to our manta... "Keep them on their heels." Don't let them in. Make them watch. Later this evolved into "Shock Trauma." But that comes later. For now we were the lights in the darkness. They were drawn to us like moths to a flame. You couldn't have missed us. All the while our parents were nothing but support. They didn't understand, but we were having fun. This craziness led to my hero status in my dad's mind. It was everything the biker lifestyle stood for, without a club to join or motorcycles to work on.

We were Gods and we discovered manifestation. Not making things appear, but believing in something enough to make it happen. Think of what you want and it will come to you. We had power and it attracted all kinds of people. People came and went taking what we gave them, leaving what we wanted. Stone and I developed completely different philosophies. He is of the view that people are disposable. If they are cool, keep them around till they aren't. Most people were just a pain in the ass. He could take them or leave them to suit his mood. I need people. They were boxes of puzzle pieces and I wanted to find mine. I used everyone as a sounding board for my theories. I would try to debate an idea, but found everyone agreeing with me. I would play the role of devil's advocate and win, against my own beliefs. I needed to talk about these things that were keeping me up at night. Most people didn't understand what I was talking about. With the sheer volume of interactions, my personal growth was moving right along. My puzzle was coming together faster than I could process.

Stone would pick and choose topics, rethink them and come up with new shit. He might have been the one molding me, now that I think about it. The whole time he would be the hard-ass, just listening, contributing only

when he couldn't resist. He's a sponge. He was as into it as I was. No matter how ridiculous I got, he backed my play. When we got home we would review the madness. Rework it into something unbelievably twisted, take it to the shop and start over with new victims. While we were shaping the people we liked, fucking with those we didn't, we led them all deeper into the darkness.

To understand the darkness I think we need a metaphor. Maybe I don't have one. Well, I suppose I do. I think of the light as a place where everything is seeking order. Darkness is a place where everything is seeking disorder. It's not a matter of chaos over order. Order is impossible and chaos unachievable. We were disorder. Everything was as we chose. We were shiny lights in a sea of darkness. We were like fishing lures in the ocean. To so many people it was irresistible. Our philosophy became, throw it out there and see what it brings in. Eventually it took on a life of its own and the tattoo parlor became unrecognizable. A lot of people put their energy into the shop. It was a magnet and you couldn't control who or what came through the door. You could stop them there, but why?

## 16

It seemed I was staying for a bit so I got a job. I was supposed to be a cook. In reality I ended up doing a lot of dishes. I think the cook was gay and hired me because his gay-dar was jacked. This is kind of a theme in my life. He had never heard the story about the dishwasher's funeral…

Sometime before that shitty cooking job I had a dishwashing job at a greasy spoon. I had to work a split shift. I would come in the morning, work four hours, take a four hour lunch break and return to do the dinner dishes. This arrangement sucked ass and I was sick of it. Just before I could quit something happened. You see, there was this other dishwasher. He was an older guy, single father, had a recent heart attack and he couldn't get enough hours. One day I came in for my morning shift and he was working like a maniac. I told him I had it under control. He needed every minute he could get. He was washing and I was drying when it happened. He grabbed his chest, put his hand on my shoulder and stared into my eyes. I could feel him trying to suck the life out of me. His pupils turned into pin holes. I pushed him away, he fell to the ground unconscious and was dead on arrival

at the hospital. As they were rolling his gurney through the restaurant, cigarettes where spilling from his pocket leaving a trail to the ambulance. I went back to work and glasses started to shatter in my hand. The next day I walk in to the kitchen and a rack of glasses fell from the counter five feet away from me. That was it. That was the day the dishwasher in me died. No more dishwashing. Yet, there I was… washing dishes for a dude I didn't like. I couldn't stand anymore. I began thinking it was time to take my new material on a road test.

One curious thing about life with Stone, with a lot of my closest friends for that matter, is that his parents are still together. Bob and Dawn like to party. It wasn't long before they saw how close Stone and I where and they embraced me as family. They knew a lot about me, Baby Micah and of course the baby mammas. I always have an invitation to their holidays and parties, which are fun as hell and they come to mine when they can. Twenty years later they are still the most genuine and cool couple I have ever met. I think it is this situation that always let Stone grow continuously. Hell, his parents were on the fast track too. Everyone in our world couldn't help but be changed.

It's usually the same with every special person or people we bond with, the things that make them awesome don't really change. Some people become assholes, but Bob and Dawn got cooler. I can say they have blurred the line of what is parental behavior. They are simply super fun people to hang out with. Bob has a machined shop and the boys had jobs most of their lives. They had their ups and downs, but through the years they did better and better. Adam, the younger of two boys, turned out to be a genius with any machine and Stone went to art school. Bob and Dawn love to share. Their parties have the craziest mix of people. Whatever the occasion, it's sure to be a blast. Stones young adult hood was a fertile garden. There was plenty of room for me. Whenever I am in Washington I try to make time to hang out with the family.

I had long hair most of my life before my mid-twenties. Aside from a few years I had a stupid ass mullet in fifth and sixth grades, I had only two haircuts. The first one was by my brother, Hogg, when we were kids. My dad's philosophy was to let us decide when to get our first haircut. My youngest brother Dan, or Baby, got his first haircut sometime in elementary school when he got sick of kids pulling it during wrestling. My second haircut was in Jr. High after I got caught selling pot on the school bus and decided it was time for a change. After that I let it grow out for the next ten years. The first few years I never cut it, but realized it wasn't getting any

longer. My sister-in-law, Anne, put me on a regular regiment. After cutting it every six weeks for a few years it got really long and healthy. Living in the Desert with long dark hair sucked. It was hot, but for years I sucked it up. I had been growing it for too long to cut it off.

One day we were out rock climbing and my bangs got caught in the belay device. Not only was it a total pain in the ass getting them out of the contraption, I had to sacrifice a big chunk of my bangs. That was it for long hair. For me, this was a sign to evolve. Anne cut my hair off. We started out trying to leave enough to have a normal kind of haircut, but in the end we just shaved it off. The shock of it all was just weird. The next visit to Stones, I came away with a Chinese nomad symbol on the back of my head. After a lifetime of long hair, my bald head just seemed boring. The nomad symbol just seemed fitting and it was the first head tattoo of the crew. My only regret is that I don't read Chinese. I should have done it in English. On the next visit, which were many and often in those days, Stone and I were on Acid and the emptiness on my dome had to go. I decided I needed a crown of thorns. We sat up all night, on Acid, mapping and drawing the tribal piece that covers most of my head. Around four in the morning it was complete, but we were too tired to start tattooing. I went back to California determined to come back and get it done.

It was almost a year later when I returned. I had thought about it the whole time. It was the next logical step for me. At the time I wanted to push the envelope, while separating myself from the masses. Throughout the years people always ask me if it hurt. Hurt was an understatement. With all growth there is some pain. My answers varied by who was asking and what kind of mood I was in. But, yes it hurt… bad. The first thing we learned was that the skin on the head is really thick. The needles dull really fast and it was more like a carving than a tattoo. I remember him going over it a bunch of times because the needle kept bouncing off the thick skin. For four hours we sat in his living room tattooing. The outline only took about an hour. Stone asked me if I wanted to finish it. He knew I did, but just had to ask. There was no chance I was leaving without it complete.

After a few hours I was nearly crying. Towards the end I was slowly sinking to the ground. I was sitting on the floor between Stones legs while he did his thing. It was nearly impossible for me to hold my head up against the pain of the tattoo gun. Eventually, Stone was on top of me. With every minute the pain intensified. It was a spiritual transformation as much as a physical one. It was late into the night before it was finished and my head was super sore. Stone had some pain relieving Neosporin and he put it on

my head before wrapping it in plastic wrap. When I woke up in the morning it looked like an elephant had blew its nose on my head. The crème had blended with the blood into a sort of mucus. When I washed it off for the first time it was a strange experience. It was a bit uncomfortable the first day.

It was cold out the next day and we went to the tattoo parlor. I was out front smoking and had a stocking cap on. Stone came out and pulled the cap off. "Show it off. It's fucking awesome." It is awesome. From that point on it took over my life. I became the tattoo headed guy. I loved the attention and all of it was positive. It freaked a ton of people out and that was the point. Keep them on their heels.

When my dad saw it the first time, his face split with a huge grin. "Right the fuck on," was all he could say. I was his pride and joy before, I became his hero. The fact I rejected the biker lifestyle never bothered him. Maybe in a way I represented the way it was supposed to be, before it got polluted with heartless greed. The transformation in the few years after my first death amazed him. The tattoo was crazy, but the pride I wore it with truly made me king of my domain. I kept it shaved smooth for a while, but grew bored with shaving all the time. Sometimes I would let my hair grow out for nearly year. When people would get to know me without the tattoo, it would trip them out when I did shave it. I would wait for times when I could freak out the most people. My dad loved it. It was brilliant in his mind. The old man always knew I was different. I was hardly a kid when I was growing up. I questioned everything and everyone. No one was spared from the probing. Now I was more obvious. I'm not the guy to single out when you're looking for a fight. Even if I piss you off, you still have to wonder if it's worth finding out what I am made of. After the dome tattoo, all that was left was growing into it.

While Stone and Lisa were getting closer we had an episode of fate you might say. I call it "Car-ma." We were driving down a big hill, two lanes both ways, and this dude cut us off from the fast lane. He realized he wasn't getting any more progress and went for the shoulder. Stone was cussing at the guy and generally heated. We saw the parked car before he did. He was forced into it. Stone was stoked. The guy sideswiped the parked car. We were laughing and talking about our instant karma. The next day, same hill, this time it's raining hard. Stone was trying to impress Lisa and hydroplaned at sixty. He did a great job of not hitting the cars around us and didn't flip us while we were going backwards at fifty down a gulley off the shoulder of the

highway. Eventually, we ended up stuck with the bumpers on both sides of the gulley. Stone ran down the hill the few hundred feet to the gas station to call for help. Within five minutes the cops showed up demanding my driver's license. I told them I wasn't driving. "Then who was?" they asked. "That guy." I point down the hill. Stone showed up and he said he was calling his tow truck. They asked for his license. All he had was his concealed weapon permit. "Do you have a weapon?" "Ya." He handed her his gun. She dumped his bullets in the mud. The highway patrol showed up the same time as the tow truck. The owner of the truck is a close family friend. The lady cop gave the gun to the highway patrol guy, who handed it back to Stone. The whole thing was lucky for me, the gun incident steered the attention from me. I had some warrants that could have ruined my life for a while. The car got towed to Little Danny's shop a block away from the tattoo parlor. The exhaust was bent. We drove it home that afternoon. We are more careful what we laugh at.

For me Jr. College was more than an education experience. I founded two academic clubs, got great grades and found I had more in common with the teachers than the students. I realized college was just a waypoint between high school and life. It is a place to help people conform to groupthink. I got my degree and walked away. I don't belong there. If I want to know something I will search out the answers on my own. Find a teacher. The people find me. I have always had a group of super intelligent people around to ask questions to. I have found I learn better when I get down to specifics. I need examples. I want to see knowledge in action.

After Stone and Lisa got together I found myself back in California. I moved out to my brothers fenced in two and a half acres up and out of town. I lived at the property, partied at Matt and Charlie's apartment, went to the Hot Springs and dropped a lot of Acid. I was in a good space of my own for the first time in years. I left Washington around Halloween, by New Year's Eve I had decided to go to college. I thought I would take some writing classes, study linguistical anthropology and earn a degree. As time went on I realized I was interested in everything. I took English classes every semester. My teachers encouraged me to pursue an English degree. The years between high school and college gave me time to soul search. I really wanted to be at school. It didn't take me long to figure out that to get good grades you have to work the teacher. I could learn this stuff on my own. I started getting cynical. If someone missed a test and wanted a chance to retake it, I wanted to retake it. Everyone in the class should get to retake it. This might seem petty, but every day longer is an advantage. We all signed

up for school and made a commitment. If you can't make it to class… your bad. Even when the teacher pointed out I scored an easy A on that test, I knew I could do better. I was saving up points so I could blow stuff off if I had too. I put my dog down and went and took two finals. I held writing workshops weeks before term papers were due and the few people that showed up thought we would write their papers. I took full advantage of everything school offered and found it lacking soul. By the fifth semester I was burnt. College had crushed the part of me I was trying to nurture. My writing was drying up.

## 17

2/5/13 Santiago, Chile

I arrived in Santiago by bus. I made my way to the hostel some guys in Arequipa recommended. It is a ridiculous party scene. During the day the twenty something crowd soaked up the sun by the pool and partied into the morning hours at the in-house bar. I had been in the tropics for seven months, I coveted the shade and I had my own booze. While I don't really do the raging party scene, I do love watching it. At every scene just like this in the last seven months I have found the one person who doesn't belong. This time it was Till, a German juggler and one of the more interesting people have had met on this trip. It turned out he had chosen Chile because it was warm and his homeland was frozen. After a few days here he found a place in a commune of wayward performers. He was just waiting for it to cool off for his trip across the city.

We went in search of a place to smoke a joint. We made it out of the hostel about fifteen feet to a stoop. We were really stoned when we realized we were sitting in front of a car dealership and there was a plaza less than a block away. Super stoned, we went to Plaza Brazil. We had discussed our views of the world, places we'd been to and where we were going. We talked for two hours while he juggled. He is by far the most amazing juggler I have ever seen. Everyone in the park couldn't help but watch as he juggled eight balls in the most ridiculous patterns. It was mind boggling seeing what was actually possible.

What was more interesting is that in three hostels, over the last few weeks, I have made three incredible friends. I guess that is my point. Though the party hostel scene is not always for me, it is a hub for people

coming from and going to places all over the world. In Huaraz, it was Shoham, trekking across the Cordillera Blanco without a sleeping bag or rain gear. In Arequipa, it was Derek, a deep thinking yogi that could be me in ten years. And of course Santiago gave me Till. In all these places I also met a bunch of sharp kids with lots to share. I met even more I had no use for. But, over and over again I meet incredible people I couldn't have met otherwise. I've learned to block out the stupid asses and find the other person doing the same. Our tribe is loneness, but we are strong. Our missions are the same, though you wouldn't know it by looking at the surface. Every time I question my choice in accommodations, I find the diamond in the rough. So to all of you guys that helped feed this book, this trip and this life… Thanks from the heart. Be true, stay strong and carry on. We are out there and we need each other.

If you ever find yourself in Santiago, Chile, in Barrio Brazil, at Plaza Brazil, do not fuck with the seeds in the trees all over the park. While they are interesting to look at, they are full of little shards of a fiberglass like substance. It sticks in you and itches like a bitch.

While I was in college, Charlie's girlfriend, Jaime broke up with him. I had known her for a few years, but I didn't really know her… We would debate and I would rip her to shreds. She was a good sport about it. It never seemed like we were compatible in any way. After the break up I saw her in a different light. She was beautiful and smart. One day all the other guys were sitting around and a deal was struck, no one would pursue Jaime. Everyone agreed but me. They all swear I did, but I was on my way into her arms and I wouldn't swear something I had no intention of living up to. You see, before the break up, we had a moment. It was a drunken moment, but it was powerful all the same.

**What about tomorrow?**

My brother threw a big bash to honor the closing of his music store, Quakes. We were drinking and jamming and having a great time. Then the most ridiculously stupid tweeker named Matt showed up. Not the same Matt from my childhood. Over the last year this dumbass would show up at the apartment parties, talk a bunch of shit and then leave. Every time I would be thinking to myself, one of these days asshole, you're gonna get your ass handed to you. He was a friend of a friend that had asked me to give him a pass. Well, all passes expire. With that expiration came the first serious fight I had been in since my rebirth. There are different versions of the story and

according to my oldest brother, Keith, he had saved me from the dumbass three times that night. My story is a bit different. It's closer to the story told by the dozen or more witnesses.

The party was going along fine. Friends and family were all having a great time. Late into the night my sister-in-law, Anne, came to me and told me a disturbing story. This 6'5" idiot had crashed the party and ended up in the back room with all the women. This guy couldn't help but piss-off everyone. He was arrogant and said the stupidest shit. He had even gone so far as to talk shit to my Mom. Anne had come to ask me to get rid of the guy. She had come to me because she didn't want my brother getting in trouble, assuming he would flip out. I'm not sure he ever found out what had happened. I went and told the guy to leave. He wasn't happy about it, but he left… for a little while. Less than an hour later someone came and got me again. Same shit. Same asshole. I was getting heated and asked him why he was here again. It turn out my brother had let him back in. Keith said it was cool and to just chill. It definitely wasn't cool and I wasn't about to chill after I heard a story. My five year old nephew, Little Keith, didn't like the guy either and was snapping him with a towel or something like that. The guy had wrapped him up in the towel and bound him till he cried.

I was done with the long run of passivism. I told him to go… now! He looked at me defiantly. Thank you… douche bag. He needed his coat. I snatched it off a chair and threw it at him. He didn't like that. As he was leaving the backdoor he looked at me and beckoned me to follow. I threw my beer at him and hit the doorway before he could get out of it. The first shot to the head came so fast he wasn't expecting it. Outside that door was the coolest scene for a street fight you could ask for. Asphalt, eight feet wide. Brick wall on the door side of the alley and a six foot chain link fence, complete with barb wire on the top, on the other. There were lights out front, lights in the back and the porch light was on. I scored the first shot and we squared off. As is my way, I brought the fight to him. I scored a few more punches before he got his lanky arms around me. He tried to bounce my head off the brick wall, but I am 5'9" and I was ripped from climbing and he was… well, a 6'5" meth addict. I slipped his grip and punched him the whole time he tried to get his arms around me. I think he thought he would do better on the ground. His focus was not fighting back. He was trying to capture me. So I kept punching his face in. After a bit of this my brother, the self-appointed referee, split us up.

Keith blocked my way and asked "How you doing?" I replied "I winning, let me go…" I was jabbing as he tried to grab me. This dude could

take a beating. Eventually, he got me. The problem was I was good on the ground too. He wrestled me down and I ended up on top, punching him over and over again. It was just too easy to get inside those long arms. For some reason we got split up again. I was untouched at this point and he was getting a thorough tenderizing. I was having a great time doing all the things I imagined doing to this guy all those nights. I was righteous and he was an idiot. He had been begging to get beat up since the first time I saw him.

The third time we squared off he was a bit wobbly and I was in total control. I didn't wait for the fog to clear. I attacked as he was getting off the ground. After a brief melee we end up on the ground in a 69 position. He was on top. He was bleeding pretty bad and we were both slick with his blood. I looked up into his crotch. I figured his head had to be in the relatively same place on me. Well, because of his height his head was a bit lower on me. I reached out and found fistfuls of hair. I pulled down hard as I could while bringing my knee up. I struck pay dirt. I felt his face mush into my boney knee. After four or five vicious blows he flew up and off me. I figured he was trying to flip out of my grip. As his feet came off the ground I pulled his head into the asphalt. It was unplanned, but it was brutal. He was unconscious and twitching.

The reason he had flew off me was because Keith had punted his balls into his neck from behind. His face was mangled, his teeth were in ruins and I was drenched in his blood. Keith helped me up, told me I just killed the guy and needed to get cleaned up. They took me into the shop. The bathroom was just inside the back door. They told me to wash of the blood. When I looked in the mirror it was a horror show. I looked like I had butchered a cow from the inside. I had on a red sleeveless shirt and you couldn't tell it was sleeveless. It wasn't in splatters. I was literally shaking the blood off that was dripping down my arms. There I was, in the bathroom washing up, while getting blood all over the bathroom. I was pumped with adrenaline and had fun exacting my long awaited revenge. This was a bit extreme, even for my love of blood sports. Enter Jaime. She was drunk and looked at me with the most amorous look as she helped me wash off the blood. Charlie had come back for a post-fight interview. He saw the look on Jaime's face and just said, "Oh." Then he walked off.

I was saved from the awkward moment by more commotion out back. Everyone was trying to figure out what was going on as I pushed out the door into the alley. The scene was chaos, though there were only three people. Carnie, the bass player/drummer for my brother's band, Faultline, off and on throughout the years, was sitting on the meth head, pinning him

to the bottom of the fence. Keith for his part was punching Carnie in the stomach. It was a weird trip. Lucky for everyone my brother can't fight. It was confusion at work. I got a couple of boots in the guy's ribs before we all backed away to look at the situation. The guy was a mess. All of his front teeth were shattered, his nose was pulp, lips swollen and bloody and he had a big ass knot on his forehead. As he was struggling to get to his feet Carnie, with what looked like a kind gesture, helped the guy to his knees. Then he held his chin up as he squared off. The blow laid the guy's eyebrow open. To everyone's amazement he still tried to get up. Carnie is a bigger build then the rest of us. That should have been lights out. We looked at each other, shrugged and went inside and locked the door. We were all in a daze. It was time to close the shop and move the party.

As everyone was organizing our exodus, I was back to cleaning off blood. My brother said something, rousing my curiosity. I went out of the bathroom and the guy is pounding on the door. The whole time he was pleading "What about tomorrow?" We ignored it for a while, but it would not stop. More knocking and we looked at each other. This guy does way too much meth. He was barely human at this point and he is relentless. Eventually Keith opened up the door and asked the guy, "What about tomorrow?" The guy took a moment to collect himself before he spit out "What about my teeth?" Everyone started laughing. Keith, trying to keep a straight face told him "You're the one that wanted to fuck around. You need a hospital." Then he closed the door. The knocking had stopped. He must have realized he got his ass handed to him and wondered off.

We loaded the keg into a truck, piled into it and any other car we that was leaving. As we were driving out of the alley we see douche bag holding a bloody towel to his face while he was talking to the cops. They were standing in front of the liquor store next to the shop and when he saw the convoy he pointed and proclaimed, "It was that tattoo headed guy right there." He pointed right at me and the cops pointed too, "That little guy right there?" They let a convoy of felonies drive right by. This guy was twice my size and completely destroyed. Five blocks later we were at my brother's and the rest of the night was a blur. Twenty drunks got a pass because that guy was a genuine asshole. "I told you, one of these days… this time it wasn't tomorrow."

When Jaime and I started hanging out, everyone was pissed. My friends figured it was a fling and nothing would come out of it. It broke up our group of friends. My brother said she was a spoiled brat and it wouldn't work. I knew it was more than that. It would be worth whatever happened.

After a year the anger subsided a bit and after five years it didn't matter. Sixteen years later, we had moved to three states, lived in Ecuador and have a son. But for the first year my circle of friends was shifting. Jaime spent a lot of time at the property before she went away for college. Time was flying by. I was dating a cutie named Barney. We called her that because she had purple hair. Sometimes we would date our friend Kathy. I had two girlfriends and then Jaime came along. I forgot about them. They just faded away with some other people.

That first year Jaime had decided to attend Humboldt State on the North Coast of California. It was a twelve hour drive and we decided to go check it out and continue on to Stones. We camped at Patrick's Point where there were a dozen or so raccoons that had been running rough shod in the campground. The little bastards were climbing on the table while we were trying to eat our dinner. I tried to scare them away, but they were relentless. So I decided a good deterrent would be some saltine crackers with some Tabasco Sauce. They were fighting over the crackers for a bit, and then they ran into the woods with their booty. A few seconds later, we found out what raccoon screams sound like. The park is in the woods on a rocky bluff above a rugged beach and it is one of the prettiest places either of us had seen.

On the way to Seattle to visit Stone we decided to check out the Trinity Alps. We picked a trail that offered solitude and followed a creek up into the wilderness. The trail was Rush Creek and is basically a steep goat trail hundreds of feet above the creek on a steep cliff. We hiked all day. Jaime was a trooper. Her first backpacking trip was brutal. We ran out of water and I had to hike a few more miles up to get snow to melt for water. It was early in the season, but it was hot. There are a few pictures of Jaime on the hike. The one that stands out is of her misery as she looked up at the never ending ridge we were on. Eventually we found a nice shady flat where we set up camp. That is where the second picture I remember was taken. It was shear relief she didn't have to go on. She was using her gorgeous smile with full effect.

We continued up to visit Stone where the head tattoo idea bloomed into reality. We sat up on Acid late into the night drawing. Jaime would watch us on Acid and never partake. She thought the stuff would melt your brain. Eventually, she realized we were no worse than normal and eventually decided to try it. But that was a bit later. We had wet our appetites for road trips and this was the first of many great adventures. This time though we both had school and headed back to the Desert to soak away our free time at

the Hot Springs. We were counting down the days till we would be on other sides of the State.

As I've said before… maybe I haven't, but I'll say it now, I have met people from all over the world at the Hot Springs. Due to stories like meningitis and cannibals, the Springs have a local stigma. It is populated by locals that spread the stories that keep people away. With the international traveling community it is a must visit place when touring the West. It is also well known among groups such as the Rainbows and the Moon Tribe. The fact that more people from LA visit than from the surrounding areas is strange. Everyone knows about it, but only a small percentage has ever been there. It is a long hot hike in and out and crazy stories flow like the hot water. It is an awesome place to take Acid or Mushrooms, or not, soak and meet fellow human beings in a natural environment. The fact that a lot of people are naked may make some uncomfortable. The hot water steaming in the moonlight, the cool creek flowing just below you, candles in every crevasse and travelers mixing it up can make for some enlightening conversation.

Over the years I have met some really cool people under very strange circumstances. Once I had this splinter and it had been bugging me for days. I was soaking in the pool with Jaime and this guy asked to see it. He had knarly scar on his neck and it turned out he had been working on a movie set when he got it. He said an explosive device had blown up prematurely and it sent a chunk of 2x4 under his ribcage and out his neck. He became the splinter guy and we hung out all night talking. Later I heard stories that he would sit in the creek in a lawn chair and give people beers and hits off a joint as a welcoming to their destination. He had gotten a huge settlement from the accident and shared it with the people at the place he loved. How cool is that? Rumor was he had met some super hottie and married, never to be seen again.

On one frozen winter night I met the most curious fellow…

## Case 4: Tobias and Strawberry John

The winter is the best time to visit the Hot Springs. There is a cold creek crossing fifty feet from the Springs. Sometimes you have to jump in way above the springs and swim like mad as the current drags you toward deadly rapids. It changes from year to year, but it's cold, it can be deep, and

it is challenging. The steamy goodness on the other side is too much to resist. This night Deerbone, Jaime and I were on Acid, when we met a large German guy named Tobias and his dready buddy John. They were going back to LA after a Moontribe celebration and stopped to spend the night at the Springs. Tobias and John were on Mushrooms and had extra. I had extra Acid and we traded enough for all of us to do both. That was a very quiet night. It was just us and a half a dozen Russians. It was freezing out and we hardly left the water. The Russians were scurrying around all over the place. It seemed like they were everywhere, but in the water. From what I remember John didn't eat animals because they were his friends and people don't eat their friends… Well, most people don't. Other than the virtues of farmers markets and organic food, that's about all I remember about him.

Tobias on the other hand, was another creature entirely. He had devoted his life to exploration and had created a web site with everything he could find on hallucinogenic substances. It was called "AllTheWay.com". It was full of philosophy, history, medical statistics and chemistry all relating to his passion. It was his belief that if every person explored the recesses of their mind, they would know themselves and their place in the world. It would be a place of harmony. What Yogis trained lifetimes for was at your fingertips thanks to chemistry. Tobias had done a lot of drugs. To hear him explain his philosophy, you couldn't help but beg the question. What do I really know about myself? He truly believes that with the use of hallucinogenics you could really, really find yourself. When you turn your mind inside out again and again you are bound to come away with some profound insights.

Throughout the night we talked about the mysteries. We agreed with each other over and over. When we had different ideas they were complimentary and expanded our knowledge. At some point Tobias and I ended up back to back, using our feet to push off opposite sides of the pool to keep our heads above water. Jaime, Deerbone and John were draped over the edge of the pool like beached jellyfish. I think they were content to just listen, because I don't remember any of them saying anything. We were ridiculously high on two different drugs and everything seemed profound.

At some point, John came back to the pool, though I don't remember him leaving, with a basket of organic strawberries. Henceforth he became Strawberry John. They were frozen solid, but so packed with sugar they dissolved in your mouth. We were super high, but everyone will swear they had to be injected with sugar. While we never saw Strawberry John

again, Tobias was to come in and out of my life for a few more years yet to come.

On another encounter with Tobias at the Hot Springs I was with two cuties from college, Rachel and Sunshine. It wasn't long before Sunshine became known as Thundercloud. Poor Tobias found out why we called her that while we were peaking on Acid. Thundercloud and I were sitting in the big pool chatting. While she was nice to me shall forever remain a mystery, for the rest of the world she was quick with a scowl and a snide comment. She was my friend's friend and we had formed a bit of a relationship over a year or so. By then her attitude had been amusing. On this one occasion she was exceedingly ruthless and cruel.

We were soaking and talking when Tobias came strolling up to the pool and climbed in. He was on the other side of the pool from us when he said "Hello" to Sunshine. She was ice. She told him he was a creep and not to talk to her. He thought it was a joke. I wasn't sure. Her demeanor changed so fast. He brushed it off and continued with the small talk. She dressed him down till he left the pool in confusion. I was really high and the rejection and humiliation were palpable. He had a grief stricken face and that may have been the only time he had been humiliated for no reason. From then on he avoided Thundercloud, as did most people. When you are high on a reality altering substance, emotions run high. You are a receptacle for energy good and bad. Sunshine's cruel show had ruined the tranquility of the Hot Springs for at least one day. A fact she is probably oblivious of.

When we weren't busy with school or soaking at the Springs, Jaime and I would take road trips. On one occasion we did a National and International Park loop. We started in Zion, cruised along the Tetons, picked up Matt in Montana, drove over Glacier into Canada and then drove through Banff and Jasper. We took the direct route back to Montana, dropped off Matt and then we headed to Seattle.

In Zion, well… outside Zion, we camped with some hippies in a free area, visiting the park on a day trip, where we climbed up the Mirador. That night from camp we could see the full moon on one side of the narrow canyon and the Hale-bop comet on the other. Both lights took up the entire width of the canyon. We were in Jaime's new Honda Civic. The trunk was packed with camping gear and my eighty pound wolf-dog, Toledo, was taking up the back seat. Once we collected Matt the car couldn't be fuller. Toledo lay in Matt's lap for the week he was with us.

In Montana we planned on taking the spectacular Going to the Sun Road over the top of Glacier. It wasn't open till the next day, so we waited it

out and crossed with the first batch of tourist that season. The alternative was an all-day drive around the park. While still beautiful, the prospect of crossing the Rockies through the park was more enticing. Near the top of the pass the snow was head high. At the visitor center all you could see were the heads of taller people or the hats of shorter people. To the dog it looked like a parade of squirrels. He was losing his mind. I let him run up the snow bank and he was surprised to find his quarry was actually people. The people for their part were freaked out that a big ass wolf had appeared above them.

Traveling with a dog is a pain. They are not allowed on trails and must be chained all the time in camp. Toledo had never been on a chain before and didn't know when to stop before getting yanked backward. He enjoyed driving with his head out of the sunroof, thus making a bit more room for Matt. Glacier was still covered in snow and the trees were drooped over with the weight of it. Though the sun was warm, the air was crisp with ice. It was beautiful looking out into the white wilderness. The icy mountains ran as far North as you could see.

Crossing into Canada and later, out of it was its usual pain in the ass. They took us into separate rooms and questioned us. After a while they figured out we were just taking a road trip to the Canadian Rockies and visiting Jaime's family along the way. That didn't stop them from dismantling the car. In fact, in the ten or so trips to Canada I have been harassed going both ways. Even as a kid traveling with my Aunt and Uncle the border guards took the seats out of their car. Once I asked them what they were looking for and they asked me, "What do you got?" I've crossed in and out of Mexico a dozen times and never get that much shit. Hell, I've been across a bunch of borders without being molested. Go figure.

Once in Canada we headed to Calgary to visit Jaime's Aunt Fey. We smoked "makins," which are hand rolled cigarettes. We may have stayed the night. After that we drove due west to the southern entrance of Banff. Banff is the largest of the four parks that cover a large chunk of the Canadian Rockies. While it is bigger, it is also drier then the parks on the western side of the range. Fey lived outside Calgary in the country. As we drove the scenery started out as farm land, then tree farms and finally as you approached the park, virgin forests. For days we drove through a forested valley flanked on both sides by steep mountains. The only scars on the landscape were the road, the power lines and the campgrounds every so often. The camp grounds are geared toward tourists in RVs and for good reason. It's grizzly country. For days we were the only people sleeping in

tents. The power lines that feed the campgrounds and emergency phone booths at every one followed the road into the distance.

The first night we ate elk steaks Matt's dad had given us. When Jaime unwrapped them she was immediately covered in blood. We figured she might as well cook and clean as there was no point in all of us being bear bait. That was the mantra for the parks. Get away from us bear bait. Of course the elk meat was awesome. We all agreed elk was better than beef.

As we drove north the forest got more spread out and the glaciers came down. The road climbed up into a long valley culminating at the Columbia Ice Sheet. It is a giant glacier a kilometer thick if I remember right. It is massive and imposing. The lookout is right below the eastern ridge and it makes everything else look small. Along the way we saw all kinds of wildlife, but the mountain goats were the most entertaining. At a pass we had to stop because there were cars parked in the road and people milling about. I stood up out of the sunroof to see a dozen or so Bighorn Sheep mating in the middle of the road. Everyone was either staring or taking pictures, basically enthralled with the display, when we were startled by the screeching of tires. We all turn to see this Cadillac skidding to avoid a collision with the spectators. This guy was driving as fast as he could through the park. He had passed us a number of times driving like a complete jackass. You could feel the tension as fifty people simultaneously thought, "Chill out asshole, see the sights."

On another road trip we took Deerbone, my trailer mate, to the Canyon Lands and to Sedona. We tripped on the Vortexes and hiked into a natural amphitheater. We rummaged through cliff dwellings and visited hot springs. On the trail to the amphitheater there was this small cliff we had to climb up and over. I was the last one and when I approached the cliff there was a good sized rattle snake staring at me. No one else had noticed though they were mere inches away from it. As we were hiking up to a look out at a cliff dwelling canyon someone above us had dropped a camera. It was in pieces as it bounced off the rocks past us into the canyon. Someone mentioned it happened all the time. People stop for a quick photo and get a bit of vertigo as they look into the camera. Trying to catch their balance the camera is forgotten and plummets to its death.

# 18

2-6-13 9:30 pm Cabin outside of Valdivia, Chile

My boss, Viella, seems awesome. The cabin I will be working on is on a few acres of thick second growth forest. Just like the others it is a forest. The trees, plants and animals are different, but not as exotic as the tropical jungles. It is more like home. While the sun is intense, it is not hot. There is a cool evening breeze as I watch darkness settle for the first time. The hostel, also owned by Viella, was my landing pad for this job. It is a cool mix of bohemian charm charged with contemporary travelers going in all directions. I could have stayed up all night playing music with the tourists there. As it was I got to bed after four in the morning. Viella and I headed to the parcela, as it is called, at 10:00 am to go through the property and its problems. She totally hooked me up with a mountain of food. The place has all the comforts of home. It has a furnished living room, a sufficient kitchen and a nearly complete composting bathroom. For now there is a half shed with a bucket in the ground to squat over.

My first day was orientation. I met the guys I had displaced and basically chilled out as I tried to wrap my head around everything. I half ass unpacked looking for the crystal beads I had gotten for Stone, with no luck. This is my first attempt at sobriety in a few years, aside from some half ass efforts. I am here till Saturday with no alcohol, aside from a bottle of Pisco I found in the root cellar. That just doesn't sound appealing. Looking through the guide book I realized I am a day trip away from volcanoes, lakes and yes, primitive hot springs. After the run down modernized baths of Peru, I am a bit excited. I do believe this is the place to finish this book.

The weird thing about the Jaime situation was that I wasn't looking for a girlfriend. I was hanging out with some extremely liberal girls and I was having a blast. I would climb, work and then party late into the night. Life was fine. With the Jaime situation came the end to a circle of friends that was reaching terminal velocity anyway. Fights started to break out, people's feelings were getting hurt and everyone started drifting in and out. Eventually the apartment was taken over by other friends and the vibe wasn't the same. My joke that everyone was a satellite orbiting around me became something to be proven wrong. I didn't hang around to find out how it ended. I was content to climb, focus on school, deliver my pizzas and spend

as much time with Jaime as possible. I was in love. Though it took a while to get to that point, we were having fun. We were going places, doing stuff, getting good grades and it worked.

At one point Jaime and I took Dr. Schuster's World Religions class together. It was the only class we took together. It was a challenging class mainly due to the daily quizzes. Granted class was only twice a week, but it added up to a third of your grade. For my part, I suck at quizzes. Jaime did really well on them. There was also a paper due every week, which saved my ass. There were also section exams, midterm and final tests and a term paper. Jaime got an easy A in the 90's, but my 87% skimmed in above the curve. Schuster knew I knew the material and I participated in all the discussions, I just choked on the quizzes. I like to think he swung the curve to let me in the A's.

Lucky for me I had Jaime for my required Algebra. I never would have made it without her. She could reframe the problem enough to where I could come up with the right answer. Jaime would always say "I don't know how you just did that, but you got the right answer." I just couldn't do the problems the way the books explained. With some help I managed A's in all my math classes. But, not really knowing where I was going in life I ended up taking statistics, or bullshit math as I like to call it. I don't understand it, but I passed the class with a good grade. In hindsight, I wish I would have taken trigonometry. I am still learning it the hard way as a carpenter. I use it all the time, but only know the basics. It's always what you don't know that kicks your ass in life.

Jaime finished JC a year before me and made her way up to the Redwoods. I went up and helped her find a place to live. That's when we met Gonzo. He was managing a four bedroom A-frame, informally, but he did the interviewing. One of his questions for potential roommates was "So… You wanna do some coke?" If they said yes they were disqualified. He never asked that question to Jaime. Gonzo has turned out to be a longtime friend who has come in and out of our lives. He loves to say he was the first person I ever met in Humboldt County. And of course he is right. I actually met a lot of people through Gonzo. He had this friend Teague. He was there when I started surfing fulltime. Anyway, Teague would come over to the A-frame and play the Golden Tee game Gonzo was storing for a friend in the basement. I would come up and visit whenever I had a break from school. I started making part time friends.

I really cracked the books the last two semesters, determined to get whatever I could out of college. I founded a writing club, of which got high

jacked by a group of sci-fi geeks. They were creative and active, putting on a Shakespearian version of "Space Balls" in the commons. During lunch for a whole week they would run and scream, running amok in the public space. But we got permission to do it and they ran with it. I would come into the commons and just watch the people. At first they were disturbed, then surprised and would get sucked into it. Everyone couldn't help but smile. Crude as it was, it was awesome. That was just the type of thing I never would have imagined from a writing club. Once a month I would hold a coffee shop poetry open mic. I was really surprised how many people would show up. I ended up on the club council and co-founded an Ecology club.

The Ecology club was the pet project of my friend Justin. We used to go to church and school together when we were kids and we ended up hanging out a lot. In college we started this club. Then he moved to Japan, leaving me holding the bag. I ended up doing snail research of all things. Desert snails are curious creatures. They live underground all summer, only emerging during the rains to try to breed. We would find the shells of ones that didn't make it back underground while we were rock climbing. We wanted to do graffiti removal and the snails came up. That took up a lot of my spare time for a few weeks. I learned that when the goats are climbing around the mountain the snails catch rides. The result is that a particular snail is associated with a particular goat. That's about all I learned. We never did remove any graffiti.

I would by amiss if I didn't mention "Stud Cake". Matt was an actor and classmate that I befriended. The guy is a freaking genius and never failed to crack me up. He was tall, good looking and a hell of an actor. Last I heard he was in New York. It was an odd mix. He was the clean cut, GQ type and I was the tattoo headed guy that had opinions on everything. It's been a long time since I've been back to the Desert, but if I see Stud Cake, I yell it and he looks. He's one of those guys that I would love to regain contact with.

I could be found at the Springs when I had the time and when summer came I made a mad dash to bag as many peaks as possible. I threw myself at the granite sentinels. By the end of summer my knees were screaming. I had problems getting in and out of my car while I was delivering pizzas. I needed to soak in the Hot Springs, but the trail was hell on my knees. I was down to three of the High Sierra's 14,000 foot peaks. Two are easy and one of those is accessible via a ridge traverse. North Palisade is a technical rock climb for the last few hundred feet and required gear and a partner. Mount Sill is next to North Pal and an easy hike once

you get from the summit to the pass. Mt. Sill has a thousand foot shear face I'd love to climb, but I just want to get the 14's finished. If that isn't enough there is a 3,000 foot slab on the south face of Mount Lone Pine I've spent full days staring at. Those are the American peaks left on my bucket list. More than fifteen years later they are still there. Split Mountain, Mt. Sill and North Palisade. One of these days… I hope it's sooner than later.

Writing about these early days of climbing reminds me of the Fire. I had it when I was younger. It has become an ember. This trip down to the Andes has recharged my spirit. I have really been feeling the urge to climb something. I have always had a problem with climbing insignificant anythings… If I put my energy toward something, I want it to be big. My miles are numbered. I have beaten the shit out of my body and there is a price to pay for hiking, climbing or whatever. I once calculated my alpine trail time. It was something like three hundred miles of trail and thirty miles of vertical gain. Double that cause you still have to hike down. This is a rough guess, but I lived to explore. And explore I did. This figure is only for my alpine mileage. I have no clue how far I have hiked. Every once in a while I would get to take someone or two.

Once I took Jaime into the High Sierra. She broke down at the basecamp at Finger Lakes. Above 12,000 feet in the Northern latitudes your brain goes haywire. Personally, I get depressed and start missing my friends and family. The altitude just got to her and she broke down crying. When I pointed and told her I wanted to take her "up there", she was not having it. Nor was she letting me go "up there," leaving her alone. I couldn't blame her, it was an alpine wilderness. Maybe you could get attacked by a mountain goat. There are bears and they are worse in popular spots… Finger Lake at the base of Middle Palisade is not one of them.

A few weeks later I returned to the peak with Matt and our buddy Sioux Dog. Sioux is the example I would use to describe Southern California hillbillies. He was raised in the village. He dropped out of elementary school. His dad used to drive him to school in a horse drawn wagon they had rode out West in the late 60's. When we got to base camp and showed him the objective he exclaimed there was no chance he was going up there. It was a good thing because Matt and I got off route and ended up on the wrong summit. There was a knife blade edge we had to shimmy along, then we came across a huge boulder we had to work our way around. It was insane. Only our rock climbing skills allowed us to skim along a tiny ledge, while the rock pushed your body out past your feet. The drop from there was fatal. Along the way we had hit a spot where I was debating a hard technical move

of which there would be no going back. As I was nearly committed to the madness, Matt found a more reasonable way that eventually got us to the boulder. I don't think there was anyway Sioux would have done it and that would have forced us all to go back down. Once we found the real summit, the easy route we lost was obvious and an easy scramble down.

If you don't know about the crazy weather in alpine environs let me tell you. The sky is blue when you get up in the morning and as the day moves along clouds start to build. Usually there is a light rain in the late afternoon. After the clouds dump their payload and the sun goes behind the Western ridge the temperature plummets. One minute you are sitting around in shorts after a cold swim and the next you are trying to keep your water bottles from freezing. As we were descending from the peak a bunch of thick dark thunderclouds started building up and as we were cooking dinner they let loose. That's when we found out we had set up camp in a flashflood wash. It was so flat it was irresistible. Within fifteen minutes there was a creek full of water moving around and underneath my tent. I had bought the Trango 2 from Mountain Hardware because I had read a tent review. An expedition had brought all the new four season tents of the time up to the Himalayas to test them. A storm had forced them to abandon camp and when they returned after the storm the Trango was the only tent still standing. As we finished cooking dinner the water had risen enough to extinguish the stove. The inside of the tent was still dry, though the water was three inches deep. We could hear Sioux Dog cussing as his summer tent failed epically. We moved the tent out of the wash and settled in for a long night of rain. When we woke in the morning we found Sioux in a crotch of a tree… in his tent. He hadn't slept at all and ended up in the tree sometime in the early morning. The morning hike out was beautiful as usual.

After college I knew I was done with institutional learning facilities. I didn't know what to do with myself. But as fate would have it that last year of school became the beginning of a yearlong party. Stone and Lisa had come down to visit me in the Desert. I took them to the Springs… They met some people… bought a piece of property in the Village, the last neighborhood before the ranches that controlled access to the Springs. It was where Sioux grew up. That year most of it was demolished for code violations. There were crazy buildings built from old garage doors that had been integrated with old campers and trailers. There are legitimate houses there, but they are the exception. Stone bought a bus to live in. I moved my trailer up. His son Conner came down from Washington to live with him. We planted a garden, a nearly unheard of thing up there. We were from

other planets to most of the inhabitants. Like everywhere there are diamonds in the rough though. We made a lot of really good friends. There was also plenty of hillbilly bullshit. Lucky for both of us it didn't really concern me, so we can skip it.

Meanwhile, the pack I had bonded with was becoming ridiculously out of control. Stone was the fuse that ended with most of us going different directions. Before that could happen we have to redefine the term "long term party." When I was a kid we had parties that would last for weeks, change locations and party on. This party was always on. We would drink three kegs in a weekend with eight guys. We invaded half a dozen homes slowly over time. We were always unwelcome. We didn't break shit... much. Usually it was our own stuff. The thing that made this group different was the violence. We beat the crap out of each other for fun. When we went to clubs everyone chilled out and watched us be maniacs. Bar owners loved us because there weren't fights when we were there. We would harass each other, everyone trying to outdo everyone else. I was pushing hard on the walls... with some help they moved. It was one of my most life altering phases. When I walked away from that scene I was to settle into a different world. Shock Trauma would have to go on without me.

The party had rolled through a few different houses throughout the year. When it ended up at JYB's, that would be Junk Yard Bryan's, we call him that because he worked at a junkyard and we had four other Bryans... anyway, we were surprised when we realized how long we had been hanging out. One day Joker, JYB and I were looking at a Pop Warner football picture on JYB's mantle. It was a team picture. I found myself, and then Joker found himself. We were maybe twelve years old. We are all over forty now. At that time we were in our late-twenties and a lot of our friends were in their forties. For years none of us knew we were on that same football team fifteen years before.

We rough housed, did Acid and drank party after party under the table. Punk bands would come hang out with us, party all night and vow to return. Only one band came back. Drain Bramage. They were the only people as screwed up as us. We visited the gay bar and were a hit. When we entered there was a moment they thought we were crashing the party. After a few minutes we were all dancing and carrying on the way we did, the party got ramped up a few notches. I don't remember too much, but it was a blast and we were invited back. When you don't care about anything you have no room for hate. We went there thinking we would get some culture, I think

they got more Shock Trauma than we got culture. Everyone could tell it was all in fun, even if it seemed insane.

Eventually the crew grew and we met Tractor Bob and Javier. Bob's enduring qualities are his power of persuasion, his knowledge of the tractor recycling business and his freakish horse dong. If he got drunk enough, which he usually did, he would become Naked Bob. Javier came from Michoacán, but had grown up in Southern California and was Bob's side kick. Bob entered the scene as we were really getting into the higher gears and thought it would be smart to hire most of us to run and work at his tractor shop. The money went away at a crazy pace. The dude that had fronted them a shit ton of tractors came and put all the stuff on a truck. The money partners in the business lost their investments and Bob and Javier ended up in Mississippi... working for the guy with the tractors. That was when Shock Trauma had runs its course anyway. At the shop though, Stone was the foreman. How that all came about is a mystery to me. Anyway, now we were working and had money to fund the party.

Towards the end of the party season, which no one knew when it started, coke had become more prevalent. I wasn't into coke and I just started fading away. They had a disco night planned and set up the party. All was ready, people came and there was no coke. What's a disco party without coke, right? After a while everyone started grumbling and the focus was on Javier. He was hooking the coke deal up. "It will be here, I swear on my balls." And he meant it. Well, it didn't show up and the drunk punks jumped in his truck and went to his cousin's, who was another link in the coke chain. The gate was closed and they drove through it. Well, the cousin wasn't back yet. When he got back and saw his gate he was livid. He went to the party fuming, so I heard. He held up the coke. "You assholes aren't getting it." I wasn't there, but I pieced together everyone's stories. I saw the cousin days later and he was still pissed. He asked me "What the fuck?" I told him I wasn't even there. I am probably the only guy he still likes. He was cool and was fun to party with, but the "problems" weren't my problems. Well, the boys wanted Javier's balls. They settled on playing crash up derby in JYB's back yard with his truck. The victim happened to be Deerbone's Valiant that JYB was fixing. I don't think he was working on it or that Deerbone had the money to fix it. He had another car anyway. He tried to enlist me in his cause of getting something for his destroyed car. The car was a symbol of how crazy things had gotten. Just another casualty. We had plenty and the car seemed insignificant. Bunches of drunken dirt bike wrecks, rolled cars, foreclosed houses, divorces and pregnancies. It was just

too much for me. I just wanted to finish school. That was more important to me than the mayhem.

I am not sure where I found her, but I met this cute Mexican girl. She was hanging out all the time and wanted to be part of the gang. She asked the girls what it took to be "in." The girls told her she had to sleep with every one of us. So, she started with Buddy. They were making out on a gas stove. This can't end well… right? She managed to catch her beautiful long black hair on fire. It was a mess, but nothing like what I would do to it trying to make it presentable. I was so drunk I couldn't see straight and I just kept cutting… eventually I gave up. When we woke up the next morning she had shaved her head. I supposed it seemed reasonable we would appreciate it. Well, Buddy just told her to go home. I never saw her again. She was just another casualty.

Javier's truck episode fit in neatly with the truck pulls and off-roading in the backyards and surrounding neighborhoods. We were bringing down the neighborhood we partied in. Out of control is a mild term. As all of this was going on I had gotten a job soldering plugs onto cables for an invention a friend's family created. I worked for Psycho, a friend, neighbor and part time observer of the debauchery. I used his house to work and after so many cables I got his old Dodge van. At ten bucks a cable I got good at it fast. I recruited Spencer, who had sacrificed his girlfriend to Stone in exchange for coming to California with him. It took less than a week to pay off the van. Before that could happen, the party ended up at his house. He had a pool and a game room. He came home to a bar overflowing with beer cans and kicked me out. I got the van, but it almost came to blows over the paper work. It took forever to clear a lien that was on it from years before. Finally, I was ready to fight about it. I had been driving a van around for months with no plates. I only had a piece of paper from the DMV stating the process was under way. I got pulled over at least ten times. But, in the end it worked out. Now we had a party mobile. It was a case of too little too late I guess.

A lot of the gang used to hang out at this Steeler bar across town. Chad, the owner, was friends with some of us and we got treated well. Buddy, or Butch or Richard depending on which personality you got, developed a new one on one special occasion. The Exploited wrote many a tunes about Prime Minister Thatcher. One of those choruses was "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie… you fucking cunt…" I had used Maggie on Buddy one day and it stuck. When he is in chick mode he is Maggie. When he is mad he is Butch. When he is drinking heavy he becomes Captain Midnight. His

mom calls him Richard and we call him Buddy. We met some school teachers one night. We ended up in one of their living rooms with her top off. Suddenly, someone was at the slider… in plain view… It was Chad, the bar owner. He looked at the scene and walked away. The teacher was distraught and we had to call it a night. Chad never said anything about it. It happened to be Chad's bar where everything came to a head. It was eminent. I wouldn't change the outcome if I could.

The fateful night came in the form of Pawling's thirtieth birthday party. We were rolling unusually strong that night. It was actually two crowds that had merged into one. There were around twenty of us and a few had MMA fights coming up. They were friends of a friend and everyone hit it off well enough. We were just hanging out and most everyone ended up in the pool hall part of the bar. For his part, Pawling waited his chance into a pool game. I was walking around visiting friends and noticed Pawling getting confronted by his opponent. The guy claimed he called the shot, but everyone there saw it was slop. The guy insisted. Pawling let it go like a champ. I was hovering around the scene and when the guy went to take his shot I had my crotch right above the pocket. He missed it. I went back to socializing. Chad tracked me down and told me the guy was a cop. Opps. I don't like cops. He didn't know. He just wanted the cops to make it out safely and the harmony of his bar to remain as it was. Sorry about what went down Chad. It had to happen. That guy was a dick. They hung out there all the time and were a bit too comfortable for my taste. They thought they could act like cops all the time, expecting to get away with it.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder and pointed, "Your boy is facing off with the cop again." I look across the bar and the guy was in Pawling's face. Pawling was ready to go. But it was his birthday, no jail for him on that night. I charged into the pool area and waited. When the cop turned away from Pawling I was right in his grill. "What's your problem, man?" I asked… well demanded. Chad and company split us up and asked what the problem was. I told him that "This guy is an asshole." The guy said he didn't know me. We went opposite directions around the pool table and squared off, sort of. It was more of a quiet discussion where he explained, "I'll catch up to you later tattoo head boy." I rebuffed, "What? When you got your badge on? You fucking pussy." He paled. He was off kilter and I attacked… verbally. I did everything I could think of to get him to swing on me in front of everybody. I whispered, "What? I know you're a cop. I don't like cops. You wanted a fight a minute ago, now it's I'll catch you later." I gambled it all and he wouldn't bite. The band "Soul Rebel" was

playing that night. They were friends of ours. They played police hate songs the rest of the night. The humiliation was complete. I had just made a mortal enemy. I bet he still wants to kill me, especially if he reads this. Then he will know who I am. Whatever, I am over it, even if he isn't.

In the following days I heard that the cop had gone into a bar and sucker punched some guy that looked like me. He realized it wasn't me and walked out. Stories travel fast in the Desert. A day or so after that I got pulled over. The cop told me that a cop from another city is going to bury me. I heard the warning. He couldn't live with what had happened and was now hunting me. This was his later. When he said that he had no idea how everything would spiral into the monster it became. Now he had put word out on the street. He was pissed he had acted like a pussy in front of hundreds of people. It sucks when you realize you don't have the upper hand and you're in deep. I had to pay. I made different plans. The paperwork for the van came through the same day. I loaded some of my stuff into it and split north up a road that was like my second home. I turned the page on the Desert, never to live there again. I visited a lot over the years and that cop was always on my mind. People always said the Desert has a curse. Everyone comes back. Well, to hell with that… I am cured. That place is a shit hole. You just need to leave enough times to see it. I saw it. My life was in transition. I embraced the coming transformation. Change was long overdue. Friends say that I move a lot because I am a nomad. That is partly true. Another true thing is that I just get sick of the drama. The nomad part of me makes it easy to just walk away. Another section of my puzzle came together and I couldn't carry on as I had before. I had other pieces to find and a shallow grave wasn't one of them.

First stop… Humboldt County, California. Jaime had moved into a shed her landlords called a studio. I was hanging out for a few days when her landlord, Gary, pulled in with a huge load of redwood from a reclaimed barn. The boards were thick and long. It was hot out and I asked him if he needed some help. He looked at me, smiled and said, "No, I got it. Thanks." Finally, after a few hours and a few loads, I was sitting on the front porch drinking a cold beer and watching his effort. He was sweating. He was tired. He looked at me. "That looks pretty heavy." I said. He said "Yep." I said "It's pretty hot out." "Yep" he said. "Well, maybe you'll take some free help next time someone offers it." He went into the house, came out with a beer and offered me a job. He said that I should get my stuff and come back, I could live with Jaime. I didn't commit to anything. I mauled it

over and decided that was a great idea. But first I had a mountain to cross off my list.

I made a plan to cross the Sierras in the North, drive down the East side and attempt a late season accent of Split Mountain on my way back to the Desert to get my stuff. Jaime and I had gone to the brewery in Arcata for a beer and lunch before I took off. I had the tri-tip sandwich. I remember because it gave me the worst case of food poisoning I've ever had. As I entered the mountains it started snowing. By the time I got to the road closed sign my heater was spitting out frozen air, the choke on the carburetor kept closing, cutting my gas mileage in half and my windshield wipers were frozen with icicles. I begged the cop to let me through. He told me to take it easy. The snow got heavier and thicker as I crossed the pass. On the other side I parked in a ski resort parking lot because I had to piss. When I tried to get out of the van I could hardly walk. The piss came out my butt as I was heaving my guts out all night. The next day I could barely walk and every joint was screaming in agony. I couldn't drive if I wanted to. Over those two nights I lost about five pounds. I was completely exhausted and dehydrated. Split Mountain had to wait. I took a back way into the Desert, kept a low profile and watched my back. I said my good-byes, wrapped up my loose ends and grabbed my stuff. I went back to Humboldt and started my life as a carpenter.

# Part III: Starting New

## 19

When I moved to Humboldt County it was 1999. The world was hyped out on Y2K, but Jaime and I were living in bliss. We lived in the tiny cabin, Jaime went to school and I got a crash course in finish carpentry. It turned out that my boss, Gary, was awesome and we became fast friends. Yet, as far as paradise goes things were changing. I had just settled in when Gary decided he had to sell his house. The people that bought the house were Mormons, had five kids and no place in their world for me. They said Jaime could stay though. As one of the conditions of the sale Gary agreed to build a detached garage, which I built for the most part, while he earned the money to pay for it. Over the month and change it took to build the garage I really got to know Scott, the new owner. He had changed his mind about me and said I could stay. The wheels were already turning. We had found what seemed like an awesome place in Eureka.

The house was on some property and as secluded as you could get in a city, as small as that city was. What we didn't know was that the house had a long and storied history of burglaries. The lady before us got robbed a few times before she moved. The landlord said it was a safe neighborhood. What we didn't know was that there was a half-way house for ex-cons a block away. The entire neighborhood had thievery problems, like the rest of Eureka, but worse. Since we were new, we still had a lot of cool shit. Matt had come up for a visit and we had done a nine day expedition into the High Sierra. We hoped to climb the Black Kaweah. It was a three day hike in, three days to climb and three days back out. We got to base camp, saw the

cancerous rock we thought was doable and ended up climbing the little sister, Red Kaweah. It was a smaller mountain and more of a hike than a climb. The fact that we hauled a mountain of gear around for more than a week and never used it was the saddest part for me. Matt gave out twenty minutes from the summit for reasons I didn't understand at the time. It turned out he was seeing spots and had a bad head ache. While I summited he climbed a little ways down and felt well enough to wait for me. We had just about every piece of climbing gear both of us owned on our backs and the loads were ridiculous. Little did I know that would be the last alpine adventure I would have for a long time.

When we got back it was Sunday night and we had to work the next day. It was a cool job. We were remodeling a turn of the century house and the owner wanted to save as much of the redwood as possible. Matt and I cranked away with hammers and flat-bars all day to come home and find out someone had stolen everything he brought and that Jaime and I owned. The fuckers hauled off a carboy half full of silver, the thing probably weighed more than fifty pounds. With the two eighty pound packs and all our other shit, they had to have made multiple trips. It was devastating. Right next to cops are thieves. Two sides of the same coin. That galvanized my hatred for people who stole what other people worked so hard to get. It has even evolved to distain for bums. Life is tough. Suck it up. If you don't fuck over everyone you know you will always have someone to turn to when shit gets brutal. The last bridge you burn will be the next one you need to cross. Ideally, anyway… I get heated just thinking about it. We had worked hard for a decade to get that gear. Every spare dime went to our passions. I was working during school and used my Pell Grants to buy big stuff I never could have afforded otherwise. For Matt this was only the first time his climbing rack was to get ganked. He would rebuild. I on the other hand took the opportunity to find a new sport and a new path in life.

Over the next few weeks I threw myself at my work, trying not to think about my stuff, most of it sitting in a dumpster. There is no way any climber would use that stuff. You see, every piece of metal I owned had 666 engraved in it. It took me days to do it all. I figured, if it got stolen I would jinx it… or at least make someone question their faith in that gear. You are betting your life, literally, on the integrity of the gear. Anyone that engraved the number of the beast on their gear had no intention of selling it. When the cop came to take the report his first question was, "Do you have renters insurance?" We sure didn't, though we wish we had. Even if it would have made us the prime suspects. I was pissed. I checked with all the pawn shops

and they all said the stuff probably went to the Bay area or Redding, maybe Oregon. There were just too many places to look. It was hopeless.

After Matt had left it was just Jaime and I and we were struggling to pay the bills. We were living paycheck to paycheck. It was during this time, I think, that I first met my dad's wife, Cindy. Her reputation had preceded her. Before they came to see me they were visiting my brother, Hogg, in Washington. The story I heard was that she stole towels, jewelry and as a topper, lipstick from my five year old niece. Everywhere they went stuff disappeared. It appeared that she was a kleptomaniac. As soon as my dad got there I confronted both of them. I explained we had just been thoroughly ripped off and we wanted to keep the little bit we had left. I told him if anything disappeared I would never talk to him again and I meant it. After about three days we were out of just about everything. No coffee, no sugar, even the honey was gone. It would have lasted us weeks. Anything sweet or stimulating was gone over night. We were so broke Jaime was baking bread for my lunches. One evening Jaime baked a loaf and left it to cool. She went back to make my lunch and there was only a crust left. Cindy ate the whole loaf, well, as a courtesy she left the last piece.

We had been going without because we knew she would consume anything we didn't keep in our cars. The bread thing was too much. I love my dad, but that was the straw the sent them packing. I told them to leave. My dad said he couldn't. His tire was down to threads and it wouldn't make it the four hours to the Bay area. He was right. I had a hundred dollars I had been saving for gas. I took him to Sears, bought an eighty dollar tire, put the rest in his tank and considered it a good deal. I was hungry and wanted my kitchen back. I love my pops and nearly everyone hated Cindy. I know my dad loved her with every fiber of his soul. I won't disrespect him with name calling. What with the facts being what they are, you can see my predicament.

There is a story about my dad and Cindy living up at Kat's for a bit. Kat's bleeding heart has since coagulated a bit. Everyone living in the house claimed it was haunted. My little brother shared his room with a ghost/boy for years without much fuss. Doors might close in your face, stuff would fall on the ground, footsteps in the night and faint voices. My youngest brother, Dan, had said when Dad and Cindy showed up the ghost had become violent. He went into his room to find his ghost/boy sitting on his bed. He looked at the kid confused. The kid screamed at him, "Get out of my room!" When he turned to leave the ghost pushed him, his story, down

the stairs. He also told me after Dad and Cindy left the ghost totally chilled to a whisper. I hate to say it, but it seemed the dead didn't even like her.

So, Cindy was a train wreck. So was my dad. They were perfect for each other. A few years later Cindy was killed in a car wreck. My dad survived, barely. When I told him Cindy had died with his brother, my uncle Vernon, he was crushed. He lived on for some years and never loved another woman. He told me losing Cindy had destroyed his desire for the opposite sex. For better or worse my dad was in love with her. We should all be so lucky. I was happy for him. It still hurts to think about telling him she died over and over. He had major problems and was on death watch for months. He clinically died a few times and every time he woke up his first question was, "Where's Cindy?" For now the mission at hand was to get them on the road to stay with my uncle Vernon. In reality, it was a relief to see them go. Jaime and I went to the kitchen, looked at the empty cupboards, looked at each other and smiled.

Not long after Dad and Cindy left, Joker moved into the empty room. His coming coincided with an exodus of Desert rats that moved to the Redwoods. Most of which are still there and all our lives are intertwined in some way. One of the first things we did when he got there was go to a Suicidal Tendencies show in Eureka. It was raining and we took in a street kid named Sam. It was an act of kind stupidity. Of course when we woke up in the morning more of our stuff was gone. We started a man hunt. I had to go to work the next day, but Joker would check the homeless stations. As it turned out Sam was waiting for him. He told him to get in and he resigned himself to his fate. For a homeless thief he sure had guts, even if he didn't understand self-preservation. So there I was at work stewing on getting burned again, when Joker showed up. "I got him." He beamed with pride, tinged in amazement.

I just bailed from a finish job I was on. Personal business. I was going to need a long lunch. Sam rode with me the few blocks to my house, listening to my spiel about just getting ripped off. I herded him to my little fenced in front yard and tenderized him for a minute. It should have been worse, but I had other plans for him. I am not sure if there is a statute of limitations on kidnapping and wrongful imprisonment, or if this even qualifies. Considering he did come on his own free will. Anyway, after I roughed him up and took his shoes, we put him in my garage with Joker standing guard. I went back to work, my imagination working up scenario after scenario. We purposely talked about what we would do to him to freak him out. Even cutting off a finger came up.

When I came home from work later that afternoon he was gone. He had used a shovel to pry away a few boards off the old garage wall. I even think there was a hatchet he left near the hole he climbed out of. It appeared he had a plan to defend himself and we gave him an assortment of garden implements as an arsenal. His escape was probably for the best. Neither of us was sure what might have happened if he hadn't. We had caught a thief and an example needed to be made. I like to think one man out there knows what can happen to him. There are far worse people in the world than police.

After the burglary we started looking for a new place to live. The place we found was in Blue Lake. While there is no lake, aside from a water treatment pond, there is a world class steelhead river and let's face it, the town has character. It was sunnier than the coastal towns, had the hundred year old Logger Bar, and a clown school. Actually, it's a physical comedy academy, world popular, mostly with Eastern Bloc countries, so there are a few foreigners about. The house was a huge double wide with room for a small garden. It was a new place for a new life.

I had made up my mind, I was moving on from climbing. I had two ideas, kayaking or surfing. There was ample opportunity for both with the Northern California coast and the rivers that flow to it. Besides, the logistics are easier. Well, as it would turn out I still haven't kayaked. I have done lots of floats on canoes, but no kayaks. I found I prefer standing up. About this time Gary was considering trying surfing and asked if I wanted to try. Of course I did. A few days later we went to the surf shop and he advanced me the money for a wet suit. A friend of his leant me his old board and I later bought it. It was freaking huge. It was made by Becker surfboards. It was 9'6" long and 24" wide. The thing was so wide I got tennis elbow from paddling it. The guy I got it from, Bruce, was a big guy and he needed a big board. For me the board was just big.

The first day we went out we got lost in the fog and ended up a mile down the beach. The next time we went I was the only one to make it out. I never really came back in. That day I caught my first wave and more. I had the time of my life. That board was so big, the challenge was getting it moving. After that it couldn't miss a wave. That was the beginning of the end. I was hooked. I got up in the dark to surf before work. I surfed after work and soon I was surfing instead of working. That board used to drag me up and down the beach. The leash was nine feet long new. When it broke it was closer to twelve. I learned the key was to stay on top of it. While I will

never be a shredder, everyone let me surf and I progressed rapidly. Soon I became part of a small crew.

Pinche Paul is a local and his dad had him in the water since he was little. Biker Michelle, as probably only I know her by, is a skate punk from Arkansas or something turned surfer. She is a total charger and one of my favorite characters because of that. Lastly, there is Teague, the drunk guy from the basement of the A-frame. His entire family is gifted with creative talent. He likes sculpting and building long boards. I remember the first time I went surfing with him during dawn patrol… he pounded a few beers before we went in. He was a raging alcoholic. But it didn't seem to affect his surfing. Not long after that he sobered up. He was sober for years in fact. I had been surfing less than a year and I surfed on waves I had no business being out in. It was with these guys I surfed fifty grit State Beach. In fact, I learned what hardcore meant. State Beach is really just a mess of rocks in the ocean. When it is really big or blown out everywhere else we could scrap together a few turns down a closed out face as the waves push up against the rocks on their way to the beach. The rocks funnel the mess into channels. Imagine paddling a surfboard down a wave that has no real definition and you are hoping that it will shape into something surfable. Sometimes it would turn into a fun wave, sometimes it would eat you whole and you would find yourself fighting for your life. Most of the times at State Beach we surfed by ourselves. On one particularly rough day someone saw us out there. We must have made it look easy, because he paddled out. Once he got out and saw how ridiculous it was, he looked at us and said, "You guys are fifty grit." Then he went in. Yes, fifty grit indeed. Besides the currents from underwater rocks that suck you all over the place, it has a shitty exit. On a big day you'd be lucky to get out of the water on the first try. The beach is steep and the reforming waves break head high onto the sand. It is easy to get pumped if you misjudge the exit.

It was summer time and the waves were small, but plentiful. I was charging along, getting better every day. OK, this is fuzzy… I have always said I ripped my shoulder surfing with Teague at South Beach in Crescent City. But, sitting here thinking about it, I remember Pinche Paul and Michelle consoling me and trying to get me back in the water. I guess it was two separate injuries to the same shoulder. Regardless, my shoulder was damaged… It was bad. When I finally got surgery on it nearly ten years later I had a 260 degree Labrum tear. If you don't know what that means, you're lucky. It hurts. My arm couldn't support any weight in the upward motion. At first it wasn't that bad. I was just in a lot of pain when I made certain

motions. I kept surfing on it for about a year and of course it got worse. I tried filming the guys instead of surfing, but I ended up surfing. Eventually, I thought my surfing days were over without surgery. I spent more time fishing and canoeing. At work I switched from my left hand to my right. For the most part I could bite back the pain and get through the day. Eventually, muscle built up around the injury and it got somewhat more functional. I had to sleep on my back for years or I would wake up screaming in pain. Little by little I worked my way back into the water. I learned that if I was careful I could surf. I only surfed on the best days and I only took easy waves, but I was surfing again. It was fate I guess, because I was about to find the Baja of Mexico.

The first time I heard of Baja was in a Crusties dirt bike video. The entire Baja is a desert and off-roaders love it. The first time I heard it referenced for surfing was back when Jaime still lived in the A-frame. Gonzo, the first guy I met in Humboldt, had landed in jail in Mexico. He had a truck load of Federalies (Mexican police), behind him and decided to turn off the highway. What he didn't know was that using your left turn signal tells the people behind you it's safe to pass. So when the truck behind him crashed into him you can imagine his surprise. For the record you can only turn left off the highway if there is a left turn lane. Otherwise, you pull over on the right and wait till it's clear to cross. The reason is the road is dangerous enough without stopped cars waiting to turn left. The road is too narrow to go around and some cars don't have brakes. Anyway, the truck that hit him spilt its load of cops across the desert and Gonzo found himself in jail. In Mexico everyone goes to jail after an accident until all damages are paid in full. He was there for a while before his mother could secure is release. Now that I had been surfing a while I started getting curious about waves in distant lands. Gonzo's jail story was the seed that got us planning our first Baja trip, as odd as that sounds. I wanted to go were my friend went to jail. I just wanted to avoid the jail part.

If I got this right the Blue Lake house was a shuffle of roommates, but I think it started with Joker as our only roommate. Red, yet another Bryan, was visiting on his trips to the area and eventually made the move from San Diego. He worked all over the States and only needed an airport. The Blue Lake house had four rooms and roommates made for cheap rent. At some point, Joker returned to Sacramento, freeing up a room and we posted for a roommate. The first person to look at it turned out to be a beach buddy of mine. Eli had a bad stutter when he got excited, which is funny because he loved to tell stories. He would make a perfect roommate.

We would sit up for hours telling stories. He had been kidnapped in Colombia, taken into the bush and relieved of all his stuff. He had studied Spanish and had dreams of working with Doctors Without Borders. He really wanted to travel and help people out. His stories about faraway lands got my gears spinning and I started thinking about South America. But time and money only afforded baby steps.

The greatest thing Eli brought with him was his girlfriend Jackie. You see, Jackie was a sweetheart… a sweetheart with a lot of LSD connections. She even knew a chemist. When she asked, they said they could make a batch, but I would have to buy five vials. That's it? I'll take ten. The Acid was flowing again and we were soon saturated in the substance. And it was really good Acid. Everyone we knew was tripping out all the time. If that wasn't enough, she took trips to Tahoe and LA and always brought me a vial back. I had mixed two kinds together. When my friends tried it many thought it was a bit too much. It was a heavy trip. It was strong the way I like it. Right before Jaime and I were leaving for our first Baja trip Jackie showed up with yet a third kind. I put a drop of that on sugar cubes with the two other kinds and never had a chance to try it before we left. So you see, each batch is different as is each chemist. When you mix them it is not like mixing beer and liquor. What happens is that you are having overlapping trips. The effects are different and phase in and out, sometimes at the same time, which is when people start having problems. The two kinds of Acid mixed together were for seasoned souls. The three kinds mixed together were for the mentally insane.

We took ten of the madman sugar cubes with us to Baja. Our plan was to drive down the cape to Cabo San Lucas. Somewhere along the way we would test out the Acid. But first, we had visited with family in Southern California. We had Spanish lessons on CD and played that the whole way. I almost knew my numbers up to ten. When we hit the border we headed straight to Ensenada. Outside of town we got sucked into some guy's trip. He was trying to get back to the States and weaseled a few bucks out of me. He wanted a ride to the bus station. I wanted a big supermarket to get supplies. There was one next to the station. When I saw how small it was I was pissed. But here we were and we decided we were going with the trip. Searching through the store I found myself nearing the end of an aisle when I saw a familiar face. It took me a few seconds to process it. I looked around the corning and it was Tobias, my LSD advocate and hot spring buddy. It turned out that he had gotten deported a year earlier and they let him go to Mexico. He had been painting houses for five bucks a day and

living up at some hot springs above Ensenada. Eventually, he had created a class on website design at the University. After a quick lunch of tacos, he said he'd love to try out this crazy Acid. I gave him four cubes with a warning, we traded e-mails and I haven't seen him since. Later he sent Jaime an email and he said the Acid was "very intense." That's it. No comments or explanation. That is a story I want to hear.

We were on our way. We were a few days into Jaime's spring break and had a long road ahead of us. Our first trip off the highway came quick. El Coyote was twenty miles down a dirt road and there had been monsoon rains days before. Right before we got to the beach there was a huge puddle between us and the ranch. We sat and debated turning around on the tiny road hemmed in by barbwire. After a few minutes a little truck crossed the mud hole, switching sides in the middle. It looked doable and we went for. It was deep, but not too deep. We hydroplaned over the last twenty feet. After checking the surf and the camp we turned around and did it backwards. It was easier the second time. Later we found out we got mud up inside the headlamp and it would be there for another decade. I think we made it to El Rosario that first night. It happened to be the last bastion for civilization for hundreds of miles back then. That first trip was more of a fact finding mission rather than a surf trip. We came in the Spring rather than the Fall and the ocean was flat until we made it near the lighthouse on Punta Conejo, just West of La Paz. Here we found ourselves within a day drive from the cape. We camped and I caught a few waves. We made some friends, who were sure Cabo was a disappointment and a waste of time and money. Regardless, we were going to start at the end. If it sucked we wouldn't have to go as far next time. They were right it was lame. It's actually quite gross. The beaches are beautiful, but the pollution is prohibitive. Everyone is on the hustle. It's a port of call, the weather was warm and everything was expensive. The most interesting thing that happened there wasn't finding the rotten clams in the cooler from days earlier. It was the sack of weed floating on top of them.

A few days earlier we had camped up in Central Baja. I had scored a sack of weed, but couldn't find it. I turned the camp inside out. I even swore we weren't leaving without it or at least knowing where it was. I unloaded the car and searched it again and again. The weed wasn't as important as making sure the soldiers didn't find it. The only way to ensure that is to keep it on your person while going through check points. They don't search your person. Well, there are exceptions, but I have only heard about them. After three or four hours I concluded the wind must have

blown it away. Soldiers poked around in the car at three or four checkpoints. Not one of those people opened the cooler. When I opened it in Cabo and saw the bag of soggy weed in plain sight. I was disgusted with myself. Dumb luck is better than brains most of the time.

We headed north, back toward Punta Conejo and we still had the six hits of madness. The main camp at the surf spot was occupied by Luke and April. Luke was a freshwater surfer from the Great Lakes. April had just come along for the adventure. April for her part was... let's say a bit different. She had thick black flames tattooed across her face. I must say more of her face was black than her natural fair skin color. I never did get to ask about the trip that drove her to tattoo her face. A few camps away Baja John was staying with his family. He was raised in San Diego and spent a lot of his childhood on the Baja with his off-roading father. He lived in La Paz during the winter and worked on twenty kilowatt power lines in San Diego during the summer. I had surfed with Luke and John on the way down and we became fast friends. John for his part had a million stories and would tell them as long as you would listen.

Punta Conejo for its part is a bit off the highway. A lighthouse sits atop the prominent point. The surf camp itself has been carved into a hundred year old scrub oak stand. The trees are probably older, but let's say they are about twenty feet tall and the insides had been hollowed out for camps complete with shelves grown into the trees. The camping area used to be about twice the size, but some assholes had burned it down the year before. The beach is separated from the shoreline by fifty yards of sand, cobblestones and oyster shells. As far as you could see were huge piles of shells. At super low tides you can walk out and harvest the oysters as the natives had done for centuries. I had gone exploring and found myself at Luke's camp. After a bit of small talk I mentioned that I had some Acid I wanted to test out. They were more than willing to "test" this Acid I had. The weather was nice. They had been dug in for a while and had a nice pile of fire wood.

I went back to my camp and told Jaime we were gonna test the Acid with Luke and April. She was a bit confused, she had never met them. I plum forgot all about that introduction thing. I had hung out and just assumed she had too. Anyway, as we were getting our camp together I built a small fire ring out of oyster shells and filled it with the makings for a small fire. I figured it would look cool on Acid later that night. I dug out the sugar cubes and we headed to the other camp. Though she didn't say so at the time, she was a bit disturbed by April's tattooed face. But, she had been

around tattooed freaks for years and had a good measure of open mindedness. There were six cubes. I took two, Jaime took one and Luke and April put three in a cup of coffee and split it. We settled in and started in on the small talk… Where we were from, why we were here and stuff like that. The Acid came on fast. Within fifteen minutes we were starting to glass over. Perma-grins and giggle fits were taking over. The waves of the drug were making connections with our nervous systems and within minutes I knew this was going to be a hell of a trip. Just as I was starting to feel really goofy and the conversation was stalling, Baja John strolled into camp. He took one look at us and knew we were on Acid. He said, "I wish I had some. But then again, I have to drive my family all day tomorrow." He hung out for a minute, then he got up, said he'd be back and left.

OK. I know a lot of people have taken a lot of LSD and had some really intense trips. I understand some of these trips have damaged the less seasoned minds. I would love to hear a story about someone mixing three different kinds and taking two for good measure. This trip preceded hundreds of others. I have been puddled, dropped fifteen hits at a time, mixed Acid and Shrooms in forests, on beaches, in deserts, cities and hospitals. I've tried rock climbing and surfing on the stuff, gone who knows how far down abandoned mines and seen things beyond description. I am not claiming to be a sage or master of anything. I do claim that this is one of the all-time heaviest LSD trips taken on… ever.

Since I've known about hallucinogenics I have wanted to explore farther. Over the years I just once wanted to truly be out of my mind. No matter how much I took I could never lose sight of the fact that I was on a drug and none of it was real. Everyone that has done Acid with me knows I will take no less than five doses. I figure if you're going to spend the time, you might as well go the distance. Over the years a lot of chemists and/or their henchmen have seen fit to lower the dosage under the guise of its "too strong." In reality, they are just watering down the whiskey for profit. Then there are the chemists with pride. They don't just make LSD, they create masterpieces. This is the Acid that is full strength and super clean. What's not to be proud about? I have been very lucky to have a stream of incredible LSD for years at a time. I have heard about the 60's and 70's LSD. If history teaches us anything, it's that things improve with time. LSD is one of those things that can only be tweaked here and there. Though every batch is different and people respond differently, it is still the same base compound. That said, what follows is as close to reality as I can put together. I have only

got Jaime to compare notes with and both of us were out of our skulls. Only one part of our stories differs and it is minor.

## Case 5: To be all or to end all

I was already seeing things when Baja John returned. It was getting dark and everyone was sitting around the fire. He threw something on the fire and asked us how it was going. "Coming on fast." I replied. April just giggled. Luke and April look at each other and agreed with me. We exchanged a few stories and soon John had taken the stage. The way he tells stories and the effects of the drug put me inside the story…

**Don Romundo**

John grew up in San Diego. His father was an avid off-roader and a surfer, so John spent a lot of time down in Baja. When he was a kid he heard the story of Don Romundo and he had been repeating it for years. Back in the 60's some off road guys had been pushing their base camp further and further down the peninsula. From base camp they would do exploratory day trips scouting out the next camp. The paved road used to end in El Rosario and pick back up in La Paz hundreds of miles later. So there was a shitty dirt road with hundreds of water crossing for five hundred miles. Aside from the original Spanish ranchers and the natives, no other Europeans had explored much of it. These pioneering off roaders were a ways away from their base when they came across a man on a horse. That would not have been very odd, ranching goes on to this day. What took them as strange, were the costumes the man and horse were wearing. This guy fancied himself a lord or something. He was adorned in a fancy Spanish style riding suit decked with silver and ruffles. His horse had silver buckles woven into its mane and tail. All the tack was made from silver. This guy was out of place in the middle of nowhere and totally clean.

He waved and shouted "Hola." He welcomed the strange visitors to his land. He introduced himself as Don Romundo, drawing out the vowels, rolling the R's fantastically and flourishing his hat as both he and his horse bowed. The guys introduced themselves and Don Romundo became very inquisitive about their strange carriage that didn't require horses. How was it possible that these common people would have such a thing when he only had this horse? He asked them to come to his house for lemonade and discuss the matter some more. They were all for it and asked "Where is it?"

"Oh, it's the big house." Pointing over the rise behind him he repeated "Casa grande." He waved his arm at them in encouragement as he rode out of sight.

The guys were in a wash and couldn't take a direct route. After a few minutes they ascended the ridge and started to search the horizon for Don Romundo. They were curious about the mysterious cowboy. His dress, his horse, his speech and even his mannerisms were regal. Looking about they had a clear line of sight to the distant mountains. A man on horseback would have been impossible to miss. He couldn't have gone far in the few minutes it took them to get to this spot. They continued in the direction he had pointed and after some time they came to an adobe foundation. It was weathered down to the ground, but it was clearly a floor to a large house. They searched around a bit and found nothing else. On their way back to camp they stopped at a nearby fishing village and inquired about Don Romundo. They started to describe him, but the villagers would hear none of it. It turned out Don Romundo had been dead for decades. Many people have seen him over the years and for the locals ghosts are nothing to take lightly. I have sworn since that one day I would search for Don Romundo.

The night had come alive and the thing John had thrown in the fire was doing magical things. It looked like it was turning itself inside out while spurting every color in the rainbow. John said it was cured Cholla, a type of cactus. I have seen it in the fire before, but this time it was defying physics. I got lost in the ten inch log as it bubbled and festered ever changing colors. All the while John kept talking…

**…You know the parties over when…**

It was a friend of John's bachelor party. His buddies thought it would be fun to rent a giant U-Haul, fill it with furniture and alcohol and drive around collecting everyone, partying all the while. The driver of the truck was the only outsider in the wedding. The groom had invited all his friends from the small town he had come from and this guy was the only one to make it. Well, on the rounds through San Diego they had collected about twenty guys who were partying in the back. There were two guys in front, the guy from the groom's hometown and a local giving him directions. They were on the phone with John as he was guiding them to his house. He could hear the guys talking and then the driver asked the navigator "What do you think would happen if I slammed on the brakes?" The navigator replied jokingly, "Well, let's find out." They were cruising at a good speed approaching John on his front porch. Suddenly, the guy slammed on the

brakes. John said he could hear furniture scrapping as a ton of meat collided violently with the forward wall.

The navigator was as surprised as John was. He forgot about the phone as he ran to the roll up door. When he opened it all he could see was a mass of groaning wreckage. Some of the less hurt guys were digging through the mess trying to get to the guys at the bottom. John said a bunch of guys were unconscious and bent up in bad ways. It turned out the groom was at the bottom of the pile. He woke up in traction, paralyzed with a broken neck. Some guys had died and half of them went to the hospital. I don't know what the lesson is here, but I was really high at that point and could visualize the event.

**Wave snake**

Fast forward to a story about a rich surfer that got out of his limo, paddled into a line-up and just started snaking waves like he owned the place. It turned out some other gringo owned the point and it was his friends that were getting snaked. The owner saw what was going on and didn't appreciate the newcomer. Push came to shove and the owner beat up the guy with the limo. The loser jumped in his limo and called the police. The police showed up. The owner offered them beer, cold beer and the limo guy just whined and complained. All the while the cops drank their beers and were being all around agreeable with the accosted gringo. After a long tirade the police finally asked him, "What do you want us to do about it?" It turned out two gringos fighting over waves is not only amusing, it usually had cold beer waiting. They had merely come out to hear the story first hand. Even if they had lit the guy's limo on fire, nothing would have come of it. Be careful who you fuck with on the Baja, its rough justice.

The stories kept rolling on. I could hear them but they were not sinking in. I had been laughing for hours and my belly hurt from it. All of us had tears in our eyes. The fire was doing amazing things, the trees were growing feet per second, John had four eyes and then April removed her leg. It turned out it was a prosthetic, but it was crazy. Voices started to tunnel and reality was phasing in and out. The visuals were so strong I couldn't see whatever it is I was looking at. Everything was an inferno of color and movement… I was thinking I was peaking on two at the same time.

**Wrung out like a towel**

John kept talking and I heard a story about a guy that blew an oil line on his sand rail. While he was running around trying to find some new line his buddies, on LSD, jumped into the rail and took off over a hill. The guy saw his buddies drive away and started screaming and yelling while he gave chase on foot. They didn't get far before they saw the oil pressure gauge and turned around to come back. As they crested the little hill, they didn't see their buddy, the owner, below them. When they ran him over and stopped, they found him wrapped around an axel, wrung out like a towel. He stopped talking for a second and asked us how the trip was going.

This was the first time for a while I had checked to see what was happening to the world inside my mind. It was chaos. Everything was awash in movement. I could hear the trees growing, the stars were all falling at the same time and the fire… Well, the Cholla was still working. Looking at it made the world swirl more. Everywhere I looked was the same bubbling colors. I could see the others, but they were swirling in and out of the mess. Then to my left I saw the third peak coming. It looked like the edge of a piece of fabric coming unwoven. The universe was unraveling before me. It swiftly moved right toward me and then I woke up.

I woke up sitting on a log, at a fire in some trees with four other people. I looked at them and didn't recognize any of them. Where the fuck am I? Then some guy looked at me, stood up and said, "Goodnight, have fun." Things started to looking familiar. In particular, the girl sitting next to me looked familiar. I looked at her. I know you. I know I know you. Woe. Jaime. Holyshit! We are in Baja. John, Luke and April… I remember. That was a first. I had never blacked out like that before. I struggled to explain what had happened and asked how long I was gone. No one noticed any change. Everyone was out of their minds too. I just sat there they said. April is now laughing manically and out of control. It was creepy. Then it happened again… and again. By the third time, I knew what was happening within a few seconds. I wasn't scared, but it was the craziest thing I had ever experienced. By the fifth time I knew where I was and who I was with as soon as I came back from Neverland. By the tenth time I was just phasing in and out. I didn't have any out of body experiences or novel insights. I was simply blacking out at regular intervals of about every two minutes. It could have been one minute or ten, but I had a little time to try to describe it to the group. So… two minute intervals. I don't know how long the black outs lasted because everyone's minds were battling chaos.

I guess once I figured out what was going on I was disappointed. I had figured I would have some profound insight or out of body experience as had happened before when I pushed the envelope. That time my brain just couldn't take all the stimulus and kept resetting. I had taken LSD as far as I could. Years of training had allowed me to enjoy the experience, but it was just a drug after all. I was just expecting something more. With this realization I looked around at the others and found them doing the same thing. We just sat there looking at each other. It was awkward. John had controlled the evening with his stories for hours and now while we were all peaking… it was quiet. Aprils giggling had calmed to a simmer, except for an occasional laughing fit. She just looked into my eyes and did the "Yep" gesture with her head. She was super high too. Holyshit! It was intense.

Suddenly, Luke jumped up, rummaged through his van, then crossed through camp and walked off into the night. We all looked at each other wondering what he was up to. But it was out of sight out of mind as they say. We had completely forgotten about him until he wondered into camp cussing to himself. He went to his van again, rooted around for a bit, cussed and mumbled some shit and came back to the fire. "Luke, what's going on man?" I asked for everyone. "I need to take a shit." "What do you need to take a shit?" "I need toilet paper and a flashlight." "Well, I don't have any of those things." Back in reality I had a headlamp shining on him. April burst out giggling. All night she had never said a word. She just watched and laughed, her crazy tattoo crawling all over her face. Luke looked on in disgust, marched to his van and then stormed off.

I think I was over the triple peak at this point, because I wasn't blacking out anymore. I was barely able to hold on to the moment, forget about what had happened ten seconds ago. The Acid that had come on so strong at the beginning must have been subsiding. The swirling reality and rapid growth of the trees were gone. The stars just sat there. It would still peak out every so often, but the experience had shifted. The world, so unstable a while ago, had become surreal, almost 2D. Everything was more ridged, cardboard cut-out edges and a sort of glossy magazine cover sheen. It was something that had happened gradually. I didn't even notice till it was a nearly complete transformation. The sounds had taken on sort of echo. This played into April's cackling laughter. Reality was in stop action animation. Things were kind of chunky and time was inconsistent. Shitty edits, as I like to call them… I've had them before.

Looking back on the event I learned something about LSD. I know now that it was the newest Acid that was responsible for the lion share of

visuals. Everyone that did that Acid by itself had reported intense visuals as the major effect. I believe that different batches of Acid will not homogenize when mixed together. Someone needs to test this if only to satisfy my curiosity. So, when you mix them you end up on several overlapping trips. Some Acid has a visual base, some audio and some body highs to more or less degrees. Mixing it up covers a wider range of bases, giving you a more intense trip, than if you did a lot of one type. In fact, after this event I didn't do Acid for years. When I did it just wasn't as much fun as before… now it almost resembles work. I had a life experience that had set the bar on the moon. As I sat there I noticed the flavor of the trip was fluid and dynamic. I was pondering the combinations of Acid and what was happening in Iraq… who knows what I was thinking about, but the next thing that happened brought reality back in a hurry.

Luke came walking back into camp looking at his hands in confusion. As he got closer I noticed he had mud on his hands. It was thick and up to his wrists. Jaime piped up out of nowhere, "Luke, where are your pants?" He looked down expecting to see pants and shrugged, "Don't know." I tried to get a hold on the situation. We are all staring at Luke wondering what the hell was going on. I asked, "Luke, what's all over your hands?" "Um, looks like mud." "Huh, we are in the desert. There is no mud. Dude! Have you been playing in your shit?" Reality hits… He blacked out, shit himself, who knows what else, came to in this condition and came into camp confused. April spoke for the first time in hours, if at all and she was excited, "Dude, what's that red translucent stuff coming out of your ass?" What the fuck did you do Luke? My mind was racing with possibilities. Did you stick something up your ass? April squealed out with a new level of insane laughter that was not helping the situation. I directed my headlamp, moving carefully around him and all I see is shit all over the place. Thank God. I was tripping there for a second.

April, in between hysterical fits of laughter, proclaims. "Dude, you got shit in your beard!" Luke moved to reach up and wipe it out, "No, no, don't touch your face. You got shit all over your hands." He looks at me smiling, "What?" He had just come to again and was confused all over again. I explained the situation and asked him, "Have you been eating your shit Luke?" He kind of grinned and raised his eyebrows as if to ask, "Why would you think that?" His reply as he wrapped his warped mind around the situation was, "I don't think so…" "OK, stand still and let me look at your beard." No shit. Cool. April was still out of her mind. It must have been the way the light hit him. It didn't appear he had eaten his own feces. What

was clear was that there was this near stranger standing in front of us with no pants on and shit all over the place. He was totally confused and April was raging with laughter. "Well, it was fun. This is just too much for me." With a hidey-hole and a good luck, we left the camp on the wrong side. Under the night sky we looked at each other. Speechless. My high was coming down fast, but not fast enough to stop us from wondering through the surf camp looking for someone to consul us. We just wanted a sober person to hang out with for a moment.

Standing outside John's camp, his dog was barking its head off, I remembered him telling me, "If someone comes to your camp in the night, ignore them, they will go away." In his opinion, strangers in the night were nothing but problems easily avoided. We moved on into the night. We strolled toward a campfire, occupants unknown. As we came rolling into their little village everyone scattered, locking themselves in their cars. It was just a gringo and his girlfriend, that was a bit of an overreaction, but whatever. One person didn't make it to a car and he turned off his headlamp as we were standing over his tent. "Hola." I said. "Hola." said the scared voice in the tent. "Um… look, we need to talk with some sober people for a moment." Wanna hang out? More or less. "Why?" Said the bodiless voice. "Well… um… We are really high on LSD and some guy just shit himself, played in it and might or might not have eaten it." The voice was hesitant, in disbelief almost as he processed what I just told him. "He's what?" "He shit himself, played in it and might or might not be eating it." I realized I could have approached the situation from a different angle. The voice finally spat out, "Could you leave our camp please?" I was still high and didn't help the situation when I said, "Oh no, now he might come over here, I'm sorry."

We had just freaked out fifteen Catholic college students on their first trip to Mexico. People on LSD, playing in their fecal matter? Wow. Don't think I will be trying that stuff anytime soon. Realizing the impact we were having, we decided to head to camp. Our camp and my little camp fire. I lit the paper and we sat pondering, discussing our versions of the events. I hadn't notice Luke didn't have pants on till Jaime said something… hard to miss that fact… I wonder what Aprils' version of the story is… I fed the last of my little sticks into our little fire. When I first lit it the shells were alive with movement. By the time the fire burned down it was over. We climbed into our tent and instantly feel asleep.

I woke in the morning to the sound of car doors slamming and engines warming up as the Catholic camp prepared for their exodus. I went to the outhouse. As I approached I remembered the events from the night

before. How bad was it? What is the outhouse going to be like? I really needed to take a dump. It was normal. I wouldn't say it was clean or sanitary, but it didn't have names written in madness all over the walls. As I sat down John showed up. The door was low and we were looking at each other when he asked how it went. I just told him "It was insane." "Ya I know. I've had some crazy trips." I interrupted him… "No man. It was insane!" I filled him in with the short version and he just stood there silent. I did the paper work and told him I would see him an a bit. He said he would see me in a bit. I strolled over to Luke and April's camp. "Hola." I said as Luke got out of his van. April was still giggling in the bed of a truck. Luke was wet. It appeared he had gone swimming, with his clothes on. "How are you doing?" I ask. "Fine." He says. "Well, after last night I was a bit worried about you." "Oh ya? Why?" "Well… that was a crazy trip. Sorry you had a bad one." He looked at me with a puzzled look, "I didn't have a bad trip." Surprised, I say, "Cool then… What do you remember?" "Not much… Pretty much just since it has been light." He had blacked out the entire night. April laughed. I look at her… She had seen it all, everything that happened after we left. She wasn't talking.

The next thing to happen was Baja John rolling out of camp. So much for visiting. The main bummer was he had an old wetsuit he was gonna leave for Luke. The shorty he had couldn't keep out the unusually cool water. We left a few minutes later, leaving Luke and April alone to ponder all that had happened since they met us. Driving off I realized I had completed a chunk of puzzle… I have only used Acid or Shrooms a few times in the last ten years. There is just there nothing to find anymore.

## 20

On the way home I pondered all that had happened. I tried to remember the spots John had told me to check out. We stopped at the ship wreck and I surfed fun waves into the darkness. We checked out the Seven Sisters and the Bay of LA. I snorkeled in the food chain. I had swum out a ways around a point into about thirty feet of water when I came upon a school of tiny blue fish. I was herding them around and then I swam through the middle, making a donut. As I was coming out the other side of the hole, the school scattered. I looked around me… I was ten feet under the surface and facing open sea. Shadows turn into a school of Mackerel. Mild panic as I surfaced for air. I looked down and there was a school of

Barracuda chasing them. Time to get back to shore. As I swam toward the cliff strewn shore a pod of porpoise's surfaced for air, then dove for fish. I didn't want to know what was coming next. The rest of the swim was uneventful. For a minute I was contemplating my place in the ocean. There is just so much crazy stuff out there. I was definitely at a disadvantage.

We had done the peninsula. We had camp fires all but two nights. It was a wild experience. Everything is possible in Latin America. I was hooked. I vowed to return during the surf season. We retraced our path through California, visiting friends and family along the way. Three weeks after we had left we pulled into our driveway in Blue Lake. It was late and we were exhausted.

Eli, our newest roommate, was sick and Jackie was always a bit dreamy. Hanging out outside Eli told me he went to Baja to try to find us. He ended up getting relieved of $800 in a titty bar bathroom in TJ. Like a dumbass he had flashed a fat wad of cash. They hit him before the bathroom door had closed. Then he had to get his girlfriend and her friend out of the place while the guys that robbed him stood there laughing and thanking him. He showed me the little cut they left on his neck as a souvenir. He was disgusted with himself. That was his rent money. I was disgusted with him. That was his rent money. I was beat and Eli was really out of it. Drunk, stoned, cold medicine, probably all three. I said goodnight.

I woke up bright and early to Jackie yelling for Eli to wake up. I looked over at Jaime, her eyes were open when I said, "Eli is dead." She was confused and said "What?" I repeated myself and we got up to see for ourselves. Sure as shit, there was Eli dead on our couch. He'd been dead for a while in my opinion. Jackie was out of her mind as she called 911. Blue Lake has a volunteer fire department. At 6:00 am on Sunday morning they got a call to an overdose. They went through the motions of resuscitating him and when Jackie asked, well… begged, "He's gonna be alright isn't he?" One of the older responders looked at her and said "It looks pretty grim." It looks pretty grim indeed.

The story that came back was that Eli's mom had given him a bunch of hospice grade morphine thinking he would sell it and get his rent money. Well, as it turned out Eli was a recovering heroin addict. I suppose the events in TJ had just broken his will to resist. The stuff he had was really strong, his tolerance was way down and his heart just couldn't take it. Now we were the heroin addict house. There were pot plants in his closet and he was dead on my floor. The cops would be there anytime. This was not how I wanted to spend my first day back home.

Our house had become the museum of Eli. Family and friends came to visit the place he died. The plants were gone and slowly his stuff too. The cops never came. Jackie came back to get her stuff. It turned out the family blamed her. They demonized her. Someone asked me, insinuating that they were having problems. "No." I said. "They were happy, talked about getting married. They were perfect for each other." That didn't sink past their witch hunt. They pillaged all his stuff. They demanded Jackie give back the beautiful husky they had gotten together. They wanted his snake, but it had been missing for a while. Eli told me his dad had not repaid the money he had lent him to open a business. He wasn't fond of his family and I could see why. The wake was at his dad's house and we were definitely not welcome. People stared and whispered. We were either heroin addicts too or just he guys that found Eli. Either way it was painful. It was just too much.

Meanwhile, back at the house I had the feeling I was not alone again. It wasn't like the ghost of Waggy. This was passive, more like someone trying to get your attention behind thick soundproof glass. I would see something out of the corner of my eye. Feel the air currents in the room shift slightly. For a few days this went on and all I could figure was he hadn't moved on yet. The shock of waking up dead and all the tragedy that followed, it seemed plausible. I am not sure what I believe about stuff like this. It was weird. After a few days his sister, his favorite sister, came by and asked me what I thought about Eli being trapped here. She said she just couldn't shake the feeling he was lost. This is one of those moments where everything is unbelievable. She looked into my eyes. I figured fuck it, maybe she could help. I was creeped out and had tried to tell him to go to the light or the door or whatever. There was nothing left for him, I told him. I told her all this and she asked for time alone in the house. Please take the time, I would come back in a few hours and check on her. I came back a while later and she was still there waiting for me. My weird feeling was gone. We talked for a bit about the last months of his life. We both felt better when she left. Seeing Eli dead on my couch could have affected me more than it did. Maybe I was worn out, but I never lost sleep over it. I suppose that was the moment I realized I had calloused over. These things happen over and over again. Death had happened before and would happen again. Eli, it was awesome to have known you… peace bro. Just another puzzle piece to add to my collection… I suppose I collected a few that year. I could now see that I was meant for a different kind of life than I had been living. When I

was cleaning change out of the coach he died on before we sold it, I felt something slick and cold. It was Eli's snake.

Now for a little back ground before we move on. When I was still living at the property, Jaime had gone away to school in Humboldt. While she was gone I had participated in some orgies. It was just sex among friends. I know this sounds shallow, but for me it was shallow. On a trip home for break she found a bunch of used condoms in my trash can. When she asked me I told her the truth as I always did. In fact, my friends cringe when I narc myself off all the time. It's just easier than her trying to figure it out. Usually I can come up with a rational reason and she lets it slide. Sex with other people wasn't one of those ration-able things. Her pain over the ordeal had been festering for years and at parties she would get wasted and start screaming for me like the world was on fire. After a few of these episodes I just didn't go out with her anymore. Summer was coming on and I moved out of the house. Matt and I had a patch to attend to. About mid-July I met Erica. She was a cute, doe-eyed surfer and everyone was in love with her. She was interested in me. I had drunk ass Jaime. It was annoying and embarrassing. Everything was about to change… again.

# 21

2-11-13 Outside of Valdivia, The cabin

I wanted to wait till day seven for a journal entry, but I have been blowing through the book and I thought it needed an adventure break. I have familiarized myself with the property, assessed the problems and needs and formulated a plan. Tomorrow a bunch of guys are showing up to move a lot of dirt. In order for the rain catchment system to work the tanks need to be lowered nearly a meter. We need to move twenty-five yards of dirt, remove the empty tank, dig it out one meter and replace the tank. The next day we will pump the water from the full tank into the now lowered tank and do the same thing with the other tank. It's a shame that it has been raining off and on for two days. The gutters for the catchment are sloped the wrong way and a bunch of water is overflowing from the wrong side. Furthermore, when I tried to clean the gutter I found it pushed up under the roof so I can't get inside it. Par for the course of my life. I just wonder around like Kain, from Kung Fu, helping out anyone that will feed me.

I am really missing Nev something fierce right now. I looked through my pictures today. I would almost consider getting back together with Jaime, but I know what I would find. She has killed the love I felt for her. Granted I drink too much. Yet, I can't forget coming home from work and feeling unwelcome in my own house. I wasn't abusive or out of control. She just gets too dramatic about everything. I hope she doesn't turn this into one of those stories about losing your family because you drink too much. In my reality, Jaime is just way too damn sensitive. Everything I do makes her cry. Little shit becomes big shit. I have killed her smile. I can't take it anymore. It doesn't change the fact that I am nearly at forty degrees South and need the space to write this book. Jaime turned into an anti-muse. Being around her has killed my desire to write. Never is a distraction and I love him so much he gets the rest of my attention. My little brother gave me a father speech about good intensions. He just couldn't understand me walking away from a sixteen year relationship and my three year old son. He just heard we broke up and doesn't know any of the background. We have barely been in touch over the last few decades. The truth is that there is no easy answer. I feel I can offer Nev more of myself if I am not tied to his mother.

I will find a way to be in his life, even if I live on the other side of the world. I need this book to sell so I can buy plane tickets… lots of them. It is either that or back to the salt mines. I don't want to live in the States. I sucked it up for a decade and it made me miserable. Life would be perfect if I could share this with him right now. After the tank problem is solved I am going to do a bit of exploration in the Lake District of Chile. Maybe I can find something cool enough to ease my pain and make these next two months bearable. So much time alone with this book has trapped me inside my head. Hopefully these next two days will keep me occupied. It is really peaceful out here. It's a perfect place to write a book. All I need now is a little more adventure to spice up the ending.

At some point, Matt had come to visit. He got sucked into a pot growing scheme and ended up staying for the summer. We had a skimpy little patch in the forest we were wetting our fingers on. It was ridiculous thinking back on it. We were hauling water in garbage bags in our backpacks up a freaking mountain. Our plants were tiny and our soil was amateur at best. We didn't get caught and that first year we developed the patch. Next year we would be ready to upscale a bit.

In the meantime we were spending a lot of time at the beach. Matt's hair turn almost white from the sun and the surf. We spent a lot of time at the nearby river. Our skin turned dark. I remember looking for Matt in the forest, I was talking to him and he was ten feet away, but I couldn't see him till he moved. A good tan is awesome camouflage. One day at the beach the swell was head high and I was getting a lot of good waves. I first saw Erica out in the water. All I could see were her dreamy eyes because of her wetsuit. She batted her eyes and I asked her if she wanted to go to Mexico. She said "Ya." This was the trigger for all that was to unfold with Jaime. It sucks, Jaime can be so cool. She's my closest friend, but I needed a break from the drama. In reality I had no intention of coming back. I wanted to keep going south to Chile.

That first patch barely paid for itself. All the while I was flaking off work more and more. Gary, my boss, was really cool about it. I know he was pissed, but he thought I would come around after the high wore off. In reality, I was already gone. I was adrift and let myself go in my sea of dreams. The ocean called to me. I just couldn't resist. My shoulder was painful, but still holding up. I was going to Baja for the winter to hone my surf skills. That was the dream.

There is a lot to be said about Jaime. She's perfect. That's the problem. We took this trip together for sixteen plus years. Her background in Biology got me close to some great minds. I worked with her as an assistant… she got a bloody nose from the heat and I had to finish the work. I got to hitchhike on all the stuff she was learning at school and then later at work. Did you know there are ant species that can't feed themselves? They are dependent on slaves that they capture to support their existence. The only reason I know is because of Jaime. She was my adventure buddy for years. I guess when life's an adventure… everyone is an adventure buddy. We did get married and have a kid. I am just way too all over the place for a journey like the one we shared. She helped me figure things out for years. We would sit in bed and talk for hours. We have traveled together since we first got together. Jaime is always up for an adventure. Thinking about it… we brutalized here. She was hanging out with, what amounts to, a bunch of jocks. I like to think she is a better biologist because she's tough. For years we were party buddies. Life with Jaime has been awesome. Sure shit happens and I fucked our life up, but I did it because it was time. It's a big life and we milked every drop of fun out of it. She has such a beautiful smile. Realizing I couldn't maintain it was tough.

I was wreck for years and she was my anchor. When I traveled she was my data base. She helped me out on this trip, after we were separated. Our dreams were different. That doesn't diminish the dreams we shared. I can't count the miles we traveled together. We would hike for five hours to find a hot waterfall. All the boys love her… Stone has a gripe, but I think it's petty. We all spent a lot of time with her. She was a kind of den mom I guess. She integrated during the Shock Trauma years with ease. She was perturbed when we lost Waggy. She went to school with him. Other than breaking into tears above 12,000 feet, she's the real deal. She's an awesome travel mate. We hit seven countries in five months and it was fun. Sure there were problems, but at the end of the day she can hang anywhere. The best thing you can have in a travel mate is someone who can make the best out of the situation.

I broke up with Jaime, quit my job and gave notice on the house. Though I had been hanging with Erica off and on, the voices of others got to her. She dumped me on my birthday at the beach. But the surf was super clean and my serenity was unaffected. I think Matt was upset with the way everything went down with Jaime. They had been friends since before I met her. After harvest he went back to the Desert. I took what money I had, loaded all my stuff in my 1965 Dodge van and went south. The van had a crazy rattle can paint job. Stone had every color of spray paint Krylon made and just started spraying. After the second round it had an evil ass clown on the front, a skull on the double doors on the side and the panel had a crazy dragon fish thing. It looked like a hippy van at first. After looking at it for a moment, it was definitely too evil for there to be a hippy in it. It was super colorful though.

Back when I was still in the Desert, Joker hit a rock and the van developed a vibration. One night we were coming home from a party and I just couldn't stay awake. We were driving all dirt roads and as I started to fade, I drove slower and slower. When I woke up we were at a dead end. When it rains in the desert the runoff will destroy a dirt road. Using a tractor, people that maintain roads put in diversions. They just make a channel that leads off the road. We were parked in one of those. The van was still running, but it offered no protection from the cold. I couldn't see straight, so I woke up Joker. He did well all the way until we got to Christopher's driveway. He took the turn too sharp and hit a boulder with my back tire. The rock broke the shear pin that keeps the rear axle straight with the van. I fixed it, but it vibrated ever since. It started out slow and on long straight a ways it built up till you slowed or turned. On that trip to Baja

that vibration nearly drove me crazy. When it hit a certain pitch it would make my left ear itch. Of course it was impossible to relieve it. I swore when I got back I would fix it. I tried for years, but the vibration was like a ghost and I never figured it out.

2-20-13 Punulaf Termas, Chile

Well, where to start? First thank yous are in order. When I left the cabin I grabbed a dead pen. Guillermo, Olga, Luis and Cristobal gave me their pencil. Anyway, my first day of hitchhiking in South America was a success. I made it where I was going. This place is still a bit off of my idea of hot springs, but it is outside and the water is hot. The pool is huge. Fitting the hundreds of people is not a problem. Couple of weird things though… Not only am I the only American, I'm the only foreigner. On top of that I am the only person with tattoos, which makes me a bit of a spectacle. The campground is a bit rugged, but I don't think I will set up my tent tonight.

The resemblance to the Pacific Northwest is crazy. There are volcanoes scattered about, lakes and rivers are everywhere and the climate is perfect in late summer. In a month or two it will rain more than not for six months. Right now the weather is cool and sunny. The water from the hot spring is clear and odorless. The area I am at now is the Chilean mother lode of hot springs. Where ever you go along the Andes there are springs and the Chileans love them. This is more like a hot spring city. There are hundreds of people. I just got invaded by super friendly dogs. I pet one and they all posted up in my camp. There are these small hawks that are as common as crows all over the countryside. They are raptors, but they are not timid.

The last couple of days at the cabin have completely drained me. I got here kind of late, ate dinner, had some rum and went for a soak. The Chileans are super friendly and the water took away my aches. If I let go for a minute I almost forget about Nev. My boy has been on my mind constantly. Video chatting with him leaves me depressed and I find myself on the brink of tears when I think about him. The rum helps. I keep telling myself it is almost over. In less than two months I will be with him, but that is little comfort. I wish I could not call him for a while, but that would suck for him. Life has been tranquil without a woman riding my ass and my experiment with sobriety was a failure.

After four days without alcohol I got wasted in ten minutes. After a pitcher of beer with Viella at a brewery, I was drinking rum with this German

kid. We hit it hard and fast, then I missed the chair and almost landed on one of the girls I work with. I blacked out shortly thereafter. I woke up with a sore hip. The last thing I remember was falling down. The German kid said I was a light weight. At least the girls I work with have something to gossip about. They haven't stopped talking shit for a week. I deserve it. They are cordial but cold. It reminds me why I am alone. I want to get laid, but the bullshit just isn't worth it. Over two months without a girlfriend and I have no desire to find one. Granted even OK looking girls look good when you're starving, but the thought of courting one is just too much. I have forsaken a love life for this book and I hope it pays off. If you've made it this far I suppose it has. Or maybe you're just not a quitter and want your money's worth. Or maybe my life is interesting enough to trade for your time. Whatever the case, thanks. This has been a brutal experience. I hope you enjoy my effort.

## 22

My first solo Baja trip was a huge leap toward where I am today. Every time I leave, I have no intention of returning. Maybe somewhere in my mind I never leave, but the idea of just continuing on is constant. Here I am in Chile and I could stay for years, but I have a son and he needs a father. The logistics from here are too crazy. But, that first time, alone, I wanted to ride off into the sunset like Butch Cassidy. Want in one hand… So, I had stopped at my uncle's house near San Diego, stayed a few days and then beat it for the border. I prefer to cross in Tecate. The obvious reason is to avoid the TJ/Ensenada Corridor. The water is super polluted and the high rises are built on top of hovels. Plus, the free road takes forever, stopping in every village the entire hundred miles. The freeway, really the toll road, milks you for ten bucks for the luxury of two lanes. You can go as fast as you want though for the most part. The other reason I use the Tecate crossing is because the highway to Ensenada goes through olive country. I buy a few quarts of the cured ones for the drive. In a few hours the mountain road spits you out in Ensenada. Ensenada is a bigger city and a port of call, making it a great place to stock up on dry goods, beer and smokes. Everything gets more expensive as you go south. From there it is a half a day drive to Shipwreck, known as such because of the rotten carcass of a barge that washed up during a storm. Anyway, it can be a fun wave, but never gets very big.

From the ship wreck it is a long day drive to Seven Sisters, the place I stay for the winter. Santa Rosalillita had an epic right point that was super fickle. It is protected from direct northern hits, but gets awesome wrap around waves. The rare West can be magical and can go on for minutes. That year they had started building the Nautica Escalera. At the narrowest part of the peninsula they envisioned two yacht harbors, one in the Sea of Cortez and the other on the Pacific. The idea was that you could pull your yacht out at one side, truck it to the other and avoid weeks of sailing around the cape. But like most things in Mexico it was poorly thought out. The thing that made the point special was the shallow bay and the rip current that deposited the sand on the point, forming a sand bar. When they built the jetties and the harbor they instantly filled with sand. I would consider it a disaster. They killed a beautiful wave for yachts that hardly come. Over the years I have never seen a boat use the system. There is a twenty foot wide road between the harbors though, and there is a new wave. A sweet barrel has been ridden off the jetties, but it is a shadow of the wave I surfed my soul clean on that first winter.

This was the place I chose to hold up. The surf was small and the fishing awesome. I mostly had it to myself and there are tiendas for basic supplies. I parked the van for weeks at a time in between trips to Guerrero Negro for supplies and some surf exploration. After a while I became semi-feral. I quit wearing shoes, wore shirts only at night, eating what I could catch fishing or diving for clams and I loved it. I would go a week or more without talking to another surfer. While I am a social creature, I can thrive in solitude. I spent my time surfing, fishing and reading. The guy that owned the land I stayed on, Jose Luis, would come down, share my campfire and take turns playing the guitar. I would use a translation dictionary to converse as best I could. That's when I realized that the coolest thing a tourist could do when visiting the third world is to bring reading glasses. Jose's glasses were so scratched up you couldn't tell what color his eyes were. Trying to read the print in a pocket dictionary was painfully difficult.

In its day the wave at Santa Rosalillita would crash down the rocks behind the point. You could time your wave by watching. When the wave hit the point, it would be fully formed and at full speed. It would wall up for fifty feet then peel along in deeper water for hundreds of yards. It took me a while to learn to cut back when the wave slowed down. I can't remember how many times I blasted off the back of the shoulder, lunching myself into the air, when the wave speed cut in half instantly. If you rode the wave very far past that point it was easier to keep going. Though the wave got smaller

and smaller, a longer board could get you all the way to the beach in town. From there it's a fifteen minute walk back to the point or a quarter mile of paddling. I have surfed waves so long that I surprised fish and birds in the crystal clear water.

On a bigger day, one of the biggest actually, I was surfing past the shoulder when a pod of porpoises caught up to me. They took turns charging ahead of me to do tricks. They would come out of the top of the wave, slide down the face, do a bottom turn and punch back into the wave near the top. I would do a bottom turn and float across the lip and they would do the same. This seemed to get them more excited and they started going down the face, gaining speed and then launching themselves a meter or more into the air. As I got into the shallower water the pod disappeared. It was the only time I have shared a wave with porpoises, but I keep hoping to experience it again.

On my first solo trip, I was camped in my usual spot and out surfing. At one point I looked at the beach to check on my van and there were three Mexican Army trucks parked around my van. I had a pipe sitting out like a dumbass with my side doors open. I hurried in and while I was hiding my paraphernalia, the captain of the troop approached me. I was thinking my trip was taking a tragic turn, but it turned out he was an English student and wanted to practice his English. He ended up hanging out with me for hours every night for a week. We talked late into the night in the van. We became really good friends, though I never stayed in touch with him. Over that week I learned a lot about the Mexican Army. For instance, everyone in the troop had a specific task. The conductors or drivers only drove. In fact, two of them had to stay with the vehicles at all times. Since they were parked at my camp I ended up sharing my meals with them. My Spanish was very limited back then so communication was exhausted the first day. We would grab stuff in camp and ask how to say it in the other language. There was no way to remember any of it though.

About half way through their stay with me the Santa Anna winds kicked in causing a major sand storm. It was so bad we all had to bivouac in our vehicles for three days. On the second day my muscles started to atrophy and cramp. I was going nuts. I had to pee in a bottle because the wind would cause swirls and drench you in your own urine. On the fourth morning the sand dunes had completely changed and our vehicles had collected mini dunes on the leeward side. It was very beautiful. Something about the way the dunes meander around every fixed feature is very special for me. The winds had died down sometime in the middle of the night. I

woke up in the dark to an almost eerie silence. I climbed out of the van to realize the sky was lightening. After three days trapped in my van I just ran for about a mile to get the kinks out of my muscles. When I came strolling back to camp the guys were just climbing out of their trucks. I guess the trucks weren't very airtight because they dumped about a cup of sand out of each of their machine guns.

The Mexican Army is basically a bunch of kids from other parts of the country under command of a captain. There is the equivalent to a lieutenant who is in charge of the ammunition. The kids don't have bullets in their guns. Only the captain and his officer have loaded handguns in case there is a mutiny. They get a food allowance and buy their food wherever they are patrolling. They cook on wood fires and have gasoline if they need to make a tin can stove. To me the whole thing is kinda sad. The experience was incredible though. The captain was an awesome guy and anyone that was coming to surf saw the army and just kept going. Jaime had picked up my mom on the way to come for her winter break and when they showed up I had two of the drivers in wetsuits swimming around on surfboards. My view of soldiers changed completely, as did theirs of American Surfers. I can only imagine what other Gringo's thought when they saw an old Dodge van with a crazy twenty color paint job surrounded by army vehicles. Regardless it is a fun story and I made some interesting friends.

Santa Rosalillita 1-22-02

Today I made three new friends. El Capitan, Chovor and Bad-ass. It all started when I was walking out to the point to surf some waves that aren't there. As I went down the beach I saw two guys returning from the point. Upon further… better yet… closer examination I saw they were in soldier costumes. I figured they were engineers working on the jetties. We exchange salutations, I paddle out, but there are no waves. I wait. Some waist high waves do come in and I catch a decent one and get sectioned twice. I stuck it out for more than an hour. Finally I head in. That's when I see them. Momentary panic. There are a dozen soldiers standing around my van. My next thought was cool… some guys to practice Spanish with. OK… try to act cool. The first guy I engage with is Bad-ass. I named him that because it turned out he was amphibious Special Forces guy. Anyway, up strolls the Capitan. He speaks really good English, way better than my Spanish, he's super cool. We hang out for a bit bull shitting. He says he

needs to organize his men, but would like to come back and talk later. Cool, I say. They start to deploy out to the point.

After all is said and done, there is one guy left sitting in a truck. I make a fire and cook a few pancakes. I play some guitar. The guy tries to fix the radio in the truck, but it's fucked. Finally, I try some level of engagement. I ask if he likes music, sure, he doesn't speak English. I sing him a few tunes and next thing you know we're pot-lucking. Dinner. He had Mexican stew, barbacoa, it's killer. I made fresh salsa. I'm out of tortillas and he only has three left. I go to the store. I come back and now it's El Capitan and who is soon to become Bad-ass. They already ate dinner, so Juan Carlos and I eat. We all shot the shit for a few hours. Turns out they are super cool, moreover, Juan Carlos lives in the truck… solo soldier… I think I will name him Han Solo.

Right now he's sitting right in front of me. He's moved into my camp and parked his boat in my view of the point. I am gonna ask them to fix that tomorrow. I wonder what the Gringos are going to think. I am laughing right now trying to imagine what my mom and Jaime are going to think. It could be worse. They are staying for six days. Han Solo just sits in the truck, all day, everyday… he's glad… he doesn't have to do anything but drive and they are here now. I can't wait for groupo pictures… I hope we get to eat meat again.

I found a journal from that trip. It is weird how the same it feels. Ten years later, five trips all over Pacific Mexico and what I learned that trip was priceless. The soldiers are just people too. They aren't trying to shake you down or bust you with a little bit of weed. They want guns. We bring guns… they bring drugs. If you don't have a gun, a suitcase full of cash or a bunch of drugs, have some fun with it. My favorite question after asking for their name and home town is, "How many girlfriends do you have?" Trust me, everyone will laugh. Give them some porn or some music and you are golden. A pack of smokes is a kind gesture. They are bored out of their minds sitting out in the desert for months at a time.

2-3-02
We were born in a world where we don't fit in
Spending our lives waiting for life to begin
So until then I will pretend… again and again
Then I will soar away to the waves and the wind
And next winter I will do it again

Sitting alone, watching the shifting sand
Blown by the wind, never the same again
When I dig in, waiting for winds to change
The restless lion is tamed, once again
For a fleeting moment, I know who I am

Spending my time, staring at the waves
My peace of mind saved, for another day
I am not afraid, my soul I contemplate
Whatever it takes, you say it's a shame
Yet this love of life is worth anything

Forever the quest, to find soul
I discovered myself, down in Mexico
Clear blue water and crystal sands
The ocean screams, please come if you can
For the rest of my days, it is my plan

Mako

In hindsight, I realize that my mom, Jaime and some Taoist sort of folk from Utah got to witness the mythical wave that is Santa Rosalillita. Perfecto overhead waves for a hefty 150-200 meters. My working the longboard paid off. Slowly for a few days the swell built up and I rode like I never had before. A complete sick experience. I not only rode the myth… I tore it up. YA. How does it go? Fucking stoked. Did I mention the perfect offshore winds and super steep faces? Oh ya.. and a kayaker.. and you know what? He was stoked too. We were stoked together. One word: unforgettable.

The wind blows over the ocean
The waves rise from the sea
I dream of finding myself
Somewhere, anywhere in between

Staring at the wind swept sea
Waves rise above an unseen reef
Always willing to share your self
It's always something to believe

Paddle out and profess your love
You know you can't get enough
It's like a demon in your soul
That keeps you coming back for more

When you finally drop in
The ritual will begin
The wave rises above your head
Takes you to the promise land

Please take me in your ocean
Fly me across your sea
The endless search for something
The only thing that I believe

2-6-02

This is the scenario, van ran OK till Jaime and my mom left. I decided, before it broke down again, to go up to El Cardon, to Punta Diablo. Everything was right. The wind was from the East, the swell was small, Northwest. Anyway, car had problems along the way. Turned out I wasn't even on the right road. Ended up rolling into Alejandro's, sweet spot, cold shower, nice palapas and a right point. Found tons of clams and Alejandro gave me a new guitar string. The new problem was I was out of Pesos and only had two fifty dollar bills. I would have to buy a lot of shit from them to break it. I owe Alejandro twenty dollars, he has no vuelto. Anyway, I went back to Santa Rosalillita to get smokes and find a mechanico. I am frustrated and dumbfounded. Keyword: dumb.

Jose Luis was out of gas. His truck stuck in town. He's worried about his battery. I gave him some gas, changed my points and condenser and apparently it's running good. Decided to go for a test ride and try to find the gas cap I lost. Run's good, no cap, but get back to Alejandro's and some San Diego dudes said there is a swell coming in a few days and sure, they would give me twenty bucks, two hundred Pesos and a few beers for my fifty. I think I got enough food, I will have to go through everything and I forgot tortillas. For now, I have a new adventure coming in the next few days. The surf is still really small and the wind is out of the Northwest. I hope these guys are right. I almost went to Guerrero Negro to gas up and make a quick get-away. My, how this has worked out. I just might make it home with the van.

Penning words in the dying fire light
A ripping wind subsides to the night
The rising tide brings waves to my feet
Somewhere inside, I'm accepting this peace
I can't figure why I'd want to resist
I'm grateful my life has come down to this
I am so close to really breaking free
The possibilities shadowed by insecurity
I only wonder why I must go on alone
Attempt regression to carry my world

2-8-02
Score again, overhead and perfect.

2-9-02
Monster East wind lays waste to everything. The road out is being covered by shifting sand dunes. I've been in the car since 9:00 yesterday morning. Damn storm killed a sweet swell. Word is another next week.

Desperate to shake off the dread
Suddenly, overcast thought of death
Will it be sudden, drawn out or quick?
Will I just vanish or slowly wilt?
28 years of nothing, then sudden terror
A simple thought grows to a load to bear
I guess it seems better to mingle with death

Then to stake a claim in the land of the dead
I can feel the adrenaline rush of fear
Is it because my end is drawing near?
Am I like a raving wind blowing myself out?
Is this the head of my own self-doubt?
Whatever it is, can I overcome it?
Even for the moment I try to outrun it
Then again I get the same dread about life
If it ended now I guess I fared just fine

The Problem
I have a problem, but it's alright now
I have a problem, just to wonder how
I can't find the good life's token
The wooden man stands there choking
I choke on the feelings as they drive me mad

I have a problem, I can't figure out
I have a problem, call it perpetual doubt
I can't hear the good words spoken
All my boundaries have been broken
So I bury the feelings that I once had

I have a problem, my blue sky is black
I have a problem, can't get it off my back
I can't hear the moral question
The tortured soul lies there broken
Searching for feelings, I thought long since dead

I have a problem, it's got me screaming mad
I have a problem, called good things gone bad
I can't bare the now or never
My walls are higher than ever
I resurrect the feelings that drove me mad

# 23

2/25/13 The cabin 11:30 pm

The moon is nearly full. It looks like a porch light through the trees. Everywhere in the shadows the forest floor is covered in tiny lights. I have seen thousands of glowing bugs, but tonight is different. The creatures are like pinholes in the ground. I suppose what is so special is that the forest is drenched in moonlight. In between the moonbeams are the tiniest light bulbs I have ever seen. They are a soft yellow color and the contrast is spectacular. I don't know if the moon is brighter or the forest is darker here, but it is moving none the less. It reminds me of Hansel and Gretel, though I don't know why. I just know that I am as far from anything I know as I have ever been. I like it. It's a good night to be alive.

I am totally charged. I have just had a super stimulating conversation with a Dutch volunteer. When he first got here we set him to digging. He lasted fifteen minutes and was ready to leave. I got him to stay. He worked on a bamboo fence and that seemed to suit him better. After dinner we talked about this book. He asked if I had any stories. Ya, I got some stories. In the end I realized I was helping another find their way in this life. We talked about LSD. He mentioned Steve Jobs and his comment about Acid helping him think outside the box. I told him so many things I can't recall, but the theme was perception. More than that, how LSD changes your perception. He had never done Acid before. I told him Acid stories you have already heard. I realized he was finding one of those puzzle pieces that will change him forever. I am glad he came. The whole point to everything meaningful is to help shape your perception in a way that will help you overcome your fears and limitations. For some people LSD is a good medium. When the world is melting around you and you know it's just a drug, the effects later in life can be immense. Once you know the world around you is malleable you can overcome your fear of what is limiting you. Take the next step. Dig down and persevere. Every awesome achievement came one step farther then the person before. When you know that fear or exhaustion or outside influences are holding you back you can step beyond.

If I had listened to all the voices I hear I would never have done anything to be proud of. I could never give my son limits I cannot subscribe to. People speak of caution, but have never faced the dangers they prophesize. Their perception is that the outside world is dangerous. My

thought is that the TV has filled them so full of doubt and fear that all they have left is material bullshit. My sister said I should come home after the fighting incident in Peru. If I had come home I would never had seen the glow bugs crawling through the shadows of the brightest moon I have ever seen. I would never had trekked across the Andes, met some of the coolest people in years, soaked in swimming pool hot springs or met this Dutch kid that has inspired me. Why would you ask me to give up my dreams? Why even suggest it? Shit happens, good and bad no matter where you are. My perception is that the world needs me and people like me to roam around and affect it. Every time I doubt my fortitude to carry on, something or someone reminds me why I am here right now. I need this. This is my life. I am learning how to deal with what I know now. Save your fear, your misperceptions and guilt trips. I need support and encouragement. In my darkest moment be my light. Be the voice that says "Carry on till you find what you need, without that I fear you will come back empty as you left."

It's nights like these I don't want to go to sleep because I fear I will lose the light. The light that shines on the dark depressing part of my soul. Maybe it isn't a light I can take with me, but at least I know it's out there. That is the point of all this. The pain of half the planet between me and my boy, the pain of walking away from my soul mate for smothering the light and selling everything for a one way trip into the unknown to get a chance to rediscover myself. Some days I am such a stranger. After remembering my life while writing this book, it all seems so fresh… the pain, the fear, the hope and all the things that used to inspire me to sing songs and write poetry. Thinking about it, Jaime has been my light and dark. She has always known what I need. She has always been my support system during my travels no matter how much it tore her heart up. She has never been able to deal with what comes back. The other night Stone said her problem was that I just haven't changed. I am not so sure about that. How could I have traveled so far, seen so much and not be changed? I guess the last time I saw him I might not have seemed so different. I get the feeling on our next meeting the changes will be more obvious. After all, that was the point all along. I needed to change. The same old life was driving me crazy. Here's a toast to change and crossing the bridge I have been hiding under for decades.

I had overstayed my Baja budget and had to sell the Becker and my extra wet suit for gas money to get back to the States. I worked for my uncle to get back to the Desert. There I worked for my family to get back to Humboldt. I collected Matt and we went back for year two at the patch. We

spent a lot of time at the brewery and I don't remember half the times we stumbled home, which was the van under a giant tree on J Street in Arcata. On one particular morning I woke up to find Matt asleep, sitting up with a filthy towel wrapped around him. On another bender we woke up and couldn't find the keys to the van. They were there somewhere, we got inside. This was about the time that alcohol really started to control my life. I started blacking out on a regular basis. Everyone said I am a happy drunk and a lot of fun. That is just the sort of thing a raging alcoholic loves to hear.

I worked with Gary and that funded the pot growing project in the woods. Matt spent the better part of the summer up there in the woods by himself. But it was paying off. On my birthday we went up to admire our work and found that deer had eaten half of it. We were crushed. It was a brutal lesson. The bitch of it was that we had deer netting up at the patch. We didn't think deer would eat full on buds. Well, we were wrong. Our ignorance was so complete that we initially didn't think it was a deer. We had another suspect, as stupid as that was.

For the better part of a week we heard meowing down the hill from our patch. We thought it was a cougar kitten and decided against investigating. One day I was sitting on a bench overlooking the steep hill and ravine when I saw a giant ferret run out on a big ass limb, jump ten feet into mid-air and snatch a squirrel off a nearby branch. It fell twenty five feet, landed on the squirrel and quartered it in seconds. Then three others charged out of a giant knot-hole. There were two smaller ones and a middle sized one. When they got to the squirrel, the big one gave them each a piece. Then another, smaller and scraggly one was wondering around trying to get a piece. As it approached the others they all attacked it. It was mostly blind from starvation. We went a ways down the hill to get a better look.

The hill was really steep and gravelly and we started to slide down uncontrollably. The skinny one heard us and started meowing, heading right toward us. We were ignorant stoners. We thought it was coming after us. The poor thing could barely walk and was falling over a lot. Regardless, we didn't want to mess with it. Then it followed us back to our camp. It kept meowing at us and we got up and moved away. Then it found a dead, dried out lizard, grabbed it and ran into the bushes. A light bulb turned on in my mind. For weeks our rat traps had been disappearing. It appeared the animal had been living off the animals we caught in the traps.

You see, we used peanuts as bait to catch rats. In the driest part of the summer the rats eat the bark off the trunk of the plants to get to the water. The deer ate the plants for water too. All the natural vegetation is in

drought mode and a healthy pot plant uses five gallons of water a day. Our traps caught rats, squirrels, quail and blue jays. We didn't mind catching the rats or blue jays. The jays are fucking annoying. We call them the narcs of the forest. They will just sit above you squawking for hours. But in their defense they let you know if anything or anyone else is nearby.

We felt bad for the weasel looking thing and when it came back begging we fed it tortillas with lard on them. Within a few days the thing had its vision back and some meat on its bones. The problem was it had adopted us. Eventually, we figured out it was a Fisher, a rare and elusive carnivore. It wouldn't leave our camp and eventually we decided it needed to be relocated. The university had a Fisher habitat and their Fisher had just died. It would have been a cool pet if it didn't have two inch claws. They are killing machines. It is one of the most beautiful creatures I have ever seen, but when I woke up to it trying to get in my sleeping bag… it was still a wild animal. We spent a lot of time watching the Fisher family and I feel extremely lucky to have witnessed them. The forest is alive with curiosities.

Around mid-summer we came back to camp to find five gallon gas can riddled with puncture wounds. We had the thing tied up in a tree, but that wasn't good enough. A few days later we found the culprit. It was a medium sized black bear. It had drunk the gas. Its eyes were fogged over and it acted retarded. I have never forgiven myself for that. We would have killed it, but it had wondered off, probably to die. Ignorance is dangerous. This is the kind of stuff that gave pot growers a bad rap, even if it was well deserved.

Another time later in the season, we were sitting around reading in what we called second camp. In September CAMP (Crusade Against Marijuana Production) was flying pretty heavy back then, cutting out any plants they found. We thought it might be better to be out of the patch, but still close enough to grab what we could if they found our crop. Second camp was in the middle of some good sized fir trees.

Matt and I had our spots where we would sit at the base of a tree and read. My tree was a little above Matt's and he was on my left about ten feet away. We were just sitting there reading when something caught my attention. A second later a big ass bobcat strolled out from behind a tree not two feet from where Matt was sitting. All I could say was "woe." Matt looked at me the same time bobcat did, then they looked at each other. I'm not sure who was more surprised. The bobcat jumped ten feet straight up into the air, Matt fell over in the opposite direction. The bobcat landed in a run and was gone in a cartoon-like dust cloud. My heart was pounding.

Matt almost shit himself and I can only imagine what went through the cat's mind.

Towards the end of the season we were taking turns on week long shifts. One night during my shift I was camped on a rocky ridge that was open to the sky. The moon was full. The night was cool, but not cold. I was sleeping like a log on the ground in only a sleeping bag. Our thought was it would be less shit to deal with if we got "Camped." Anyway, I woke up to chaos. There were more than twenty birds squawking and bouncing around the moonlight. I saw flashes of a medium sized animal. I assumed it was the bobcat jumping around trying to catch dinner. I imagine the birds were quail, as they are the only thing in those numbers. It was happening all around me and over me. It seemed to be a part of a cartoon to me. I screamed "Hey!", and everything stopped instantly. I can remember feathers floating in the moonlight. Then everything scattered in different directions. My heart was pounding so hard I couldn't go back to sleep.

On another occasion Matt and I were sitting on the cliff where we eventually found the Fishers. It was a completely calm day, no air was moving. The forest was as quiet as it gets when we heard a snap, a really loud snap, then a creaking sound. We looked up to see a hundred foot fir tree falling, for no reason, towards us. I got lucky and my escape route was to the side of the falling tree. Matt ran straight with it. It was a big ass tree and took a bit of time to fall. Matt, running as fast as he could, had barely escaped, the thinner branches of the tree scraping down his back.

Compared to a jeep commercial not a lot happens very often in nature. The forest moves really slow. If you spend enough time out there you can see a thirty second commercial in a lifetime. That summer was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. Granted ten pounds of pot got ate by deer and we barely came away with a few pounds. But we were filthy rich in experiences. We fucked up a lot, overcame our ignorance and in the end neither of us complained. To have the opportunity to be a part of nature instead of apart from it has had a lasting effect. Before that second summer I was a seasoned woodsman. After it I was a naturalist. It was amazing and the words can't do it justice. As I stand here recounting the events, missing a lot of them, I can't help but hold my rotgut up and solute Mother Nature. She is there for us if we take the time to enjoy it.

Once we were climbing the hill, which is a dirty cliff, with gas powered water pumps on our backs. Matt was below me when the root he was holding on to gave out. It was totally slow motion. Matt started falling backward. The last thing I saw was his giant eyes as he started to tumble,

head over heels, thirty feet down to the rocky creek bed. I could hear him groaning and then I heard a loud crash. I called to him. Nothing. My mind was spinning. We were a mile from a road and didn't have a car there. Please don't be hurt bad. I yelled again, and then finally he called up, "I'm OK." Luckily, he had landed on the pump and not his head. Aside from a bit of skin loss, he was OK. He climbed back up and we continued with our job. We still talk about how crazy lucky that was.

Before I had left the Desert for Northern California I had bought an old Dodge motorhome from my buddy Tractor Bob. The roof leaked, but it was only eight hundred dollars. It sat there in the desert for a few years and I wasn't sure what I was going to do with it. Joker had been living in it up in the village, but after Pawling and the cop thing I had to leave it for another day. Well that day came. We were gonna use it for a base camp in Baja. The gang had decided to head down for a bit. Some of us for the winter, others for as long as it was fun. We used some of the money from our second year to buy a new motor and my grandma bought me new tires. We did a ghetto patch on the roof and we were on our way. On our way down through Southern California everything was going well. The Santa Anna winds were blowing and a 1973 twenty foot motorhome was built to catch all the wind. Matt had a saying, "You just gotta let it go." We were both blown all over the freeway, but hey, it had a bitchen rattle can paint job. There was an American flag on one side and a tropical island scene on the other. We were on top of the world. About twenty miles south of the border the rear wheels started to seize up. It turned out years later the brake return springs had given out, but we didn't know that at the time. It was what I called the Tortilla Experiment.

## 24

In my opinion it was a failure. It wasn't that the RV broke down an hour into Mexico, or that Pinche Paul and Joker drank away most of their money at Tio Ricki's Cantina across the street from the slowest mechanic in Mexico. Or that we spent a lot of time at Santa Rosalillita before I realized it wasn't a working wave anymore, or that Matt had a depression fit, or that it almost came to blows with Pinche Paul. I realized that my Baja experience was diminished by the people I wanted to share it with. Matt would have left at a few points if he could of, but even when he had his chance, he came back. When we took the motorhome back to the Desert to get the van he

came back with me. First time for everything I suppose. Pinche and Joker were drunk the entire time we were stranded and drank away most of their money. Red was the rock, as always. He doesn't deal with stress well, but he was stoked to be on vacation.

One day I was going over to the bar to check on the boys when something happened to distract me. A few moments later a car spun out and flipped right where I would have been crossing the street. Like everyone else we ran down there and helped flip the car back onto its wheels. The locals where surprised when we just walked into the bar. I guess they expected us to make a big deal out of it. The idea was to get the car out of there before the police could ruin every ones day. Even though it was a slow motion single car accident the cops wanted a bribe. They didn't get one that time. And I didn't get rolled over by a freakish accident.

I didn't spend a lot of time at the bar with the boys... I needed my money to last the winter. One of the times I did go, shit got stupid. There were these two cops from Atlanta, Georgia. They were fairly buff, really black and super cool. There was this senorita draped all over them. Paul and I were talking about the black soldiers during the Mexican/American war. I made some comment that it was funny this tiny Mexican girl was totally into the two big black guys. Well, Paul being the obnoxious ass he was, yelled out "That's racist. That the most racist thing I ever heard." Then went on a tirade until the two cops came over and asked what was racist. I wanted to punch Paul's teeth out for being a drunk ass. Then Joker calmly looked over at us and proclaimed "It's all about yellow and black." The cops asked "What's that supposed to mean?" "It's all about the Steelers." Everyone started laughing. Disaster averted, I thanked Paul for being a cunt and left. I still don't know what his problem was, but it was the beginning of the end for our friendship.

Red is a freak of nature. While he gets as drunk as the rest of us, though he has freaked out several times, he is the most responsible person I know. He flew all over the country doing seminars for years. He knew it was bullshit, not all of it, but it paid so much he sold his soul. Eventually he saw the light and found a way to trade the big check for a life worth talking about. Out of all of us, he has probably made the biggest transformation. Of all the boys, he has the most respect from me. He is fair. Even when I left a big ass mess, including a used condom on the floor at his house while he was gone, he just said he had to go. He was chewing my ass over the phone when he found it. He didn't lose his cool. He just didn't want to talk to me for a while. When he did finally call me back he just had a new set of

rules for me at his house. I love him dearly. He got a DUI on the way home from Six Rivers Brewery one night and was sober for a long time. One night in jail was more than enough punishment. It completely fucked up his life when they took his license, because he needed to drive for his job. On top of that, he had to drive for hours to get to the airport. He is also the only guy I know who will take Acid to keep him awake when he has to drive six hours to Sacramento in the middle of the night. Thinking about Red, there is just not enough words to explain the guy. If I had to pick one it would be "special" and not in a retarded way. He was just the odd man out and still thrived with the crew.

Pinche Paul…I have a hard time finding the words to describe him. He's a cold water surfer born and bred. He is his own worst enemy, second only to Joker. Paul was born to surf. His dad surfed and had him surfing when he was a pup. He spent a few months in prison in Bali for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. I suppose it is just the kind of thing that would happen to him. I paddled into waves I shouldn't have because he made it look so easy. Back when I had a valium hook up I had given him a bunch. I didn't think he would do them all at the same time. One afternoon Teague went to get him to go surfing and found him passed out cold and his teapot melting on the stove. The house could have been burning around him and he wouldn't have noticed. Even if he did notice he might have just rolled over and gone back to sleep. While Paul never fucked me over, he did piss off a lot of my friends enough to where we don't mention his name in mixed company.

Joker is one of my best friends in this world. He is awesome, but loves to fuck his life up. He is the epitome of the phrase "Give him enough rope and he'd hang himself." On my birthday one year, he knocked up Jaime's best friend. When he rejected her she put him through hell. They have Stella, the wickedly smart and beautiful girl who I am honored to be an uncle to. But Tara, freaked out, disowned all of us, Jaime included, because we wouldn't take her side against Joker. Eventually she fell apart in court during the custody battle, which was bound to happen when her delusion didn't pan out. Joker is a tough one to describe though. A raging alcoholic wouldn't be inappropriate. But there is more to him than that. He got caught cheating both the IRS and unemployment and still bitched that he got set up. He is the youngest of a pile of kids and has nephews older than him. He is loud and when he gets drunk he is really, really loud. So is his sister Marise, maybe it just runs in the family. He did have his life together for a few years, mostly because of his girlfriend Kat, which he gave up because she

wouldn't leave Sacramento. She swore I didn't like her, but she was one of the good things that have happened to Joker. In reality, I thought she was cool as hell and a sweat heart. More than that though, she was good for him.

You guys are familiar with Matt. He would be my wife if we were gay. He would be mad I said that, but c'mon man, could you really see me as the wife? He did dye his hair for a while. I have the craziest relationship with him. He just loves my abusive nature. He has balls the size of planets, but only uses them when I puss out. The only times he has let me down was when I didn't really need him. Every time we have had an epic adventure or misadventure he is a stalwart. He's the kind of guy that needed to be needed to be a badass. Anything less than extreme gives him the chance to crawl back inside himself. I used to give him two weeks to get a girl before I would swoop them up. He's forty and still trying to find a girl badass enough to take my place. He even fucked off one of the coolest chicks I ever met. Neither of us are sure why. Cheers Valerie! It wasn't you I promise.

Then there is me. Of course self-criticism is lame to begin with, but I am my own worst critic. Most of my problems stem from my alcoholism. The rest are ego induced. My main problem is if I can't have my way, than fuck it. I hardly ever let myself down, but when I do it is a catastrophe for me. One of my worst traits is probably my ability to walk away, complaining the whole time. If you disagree with me, that is your problem. One of my favorite movie lines of all times is in "Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels" the scrawny drug kingpin dude says "If the milk turns out to be sour, I ain't the kind of pussy to drink it." My tragic flaw is that if I am not right, fuck it. It has worked for the most part my whole life. I used to compare all people to the mother of my first child. Now I find the comparison against the mother of my second. She was my closest friend for over a decade, but right now I can't stand her. If you remind me of her you are on the way out of my life. Granted we have a child together, but no one tried harder to extinguish the light that she loved. In the aftermath, I realize I was never as miserable as I was with her. For years she was my light, but me being me…cheating, drinking, never lying, and just smoking pot, fed her insecurities. Sixteen years and the first ten were awesome, the rest switched between bitchen and fucked. It is mostly my fault. I have no problem admitting that, but she knew better than anyone what I needed and chose to ignore that. I suppose my least valuable trait is my unwillingness to learn from my failures. While it hasn't cost me dearly yet, this life is still young.

So there we were, broke down less than an hour from the border. Some American guy told us about Garcia, a good mechanic. He might have

been a good mechanic, but he tore the RV apart, then disappeared. He would leave for the entire day, sometimes coming back the next one. He let us stay at his property which had an old outdoor restaurant. At one point we considered opening a restaurant and selling food and beer. He had a skin and bones dog tied to a stake in the ground. One day I was exploring his place and found his other dog. It was a pile of bones on a chain. I think he thought of them as security, if he thought of them at all. After a week we nicknamed him "El Tortoise." When he found out what it meant he didn't like it. After a week of working on the RV it was still having the same problem. He tried to charge me two hundred and fifty dollars. I told him he was high. He said we were Americans, when we ran out of money we could just go home. I told him I could just kick his ass or he could take a hundred. The whole time Pinche Paul and Joker were across the street at Tio Ricki's spending the little money they had. At least we had free camping, though not somewhere we would have stayed if we had a choice.

For some years I had a problem with my middle finger. Anytime I scraped the side of it, it would flare up and turn into a giant wound. It was one of my main problems with rock climbing. My hand was swollen, my finger ridiculously huge more than not for years. I always thought I had something in it causing it to get infected. Eventually I went to a hand specialist in San Francisco prepared to cut the thing off, but he told me I had a Whitlow. A Whitlow is a Herpe that just lands anywhere. It's not a sexually transmitted type. I figure I got it beating up tweeker Matt in the alley. The only cure for it is Valtrex, an expensive horse pill you have to take every day. It wouldn't pay for the pharmaceutical companies to just cure the thing. When I got stressed out the thing would go ape shit. The RV nightmare caused it to do just that.

There was a clinic up the road and Red let me use his truck to go there. I told the doctor I needed Valtrex and he said that shit was a scam. In Mexico there is an injection that could make it go away for a year, then after a few treatments it goes away entirely. He was right, but I was expecting him to send me off and get the stuff and then he would give me the injection. When I came back he said, "You're a very good patient. Now you just inject this into your butt." I was surprised. He was the doctor, but I had to do the injection. Later I found out the pharmacists in Latin America usually do the injections. My main problem was no one could read the directions or side effects. Pinche volunteered to administer the drug and within a few hours I began feeling really weird. I had hallucinations and problems with my balance. We had to do it twice. So again the next day I was tripped out and

not feeling well. But it worked. I have only had one problem after that and it was almost a year later, then no problems since. So if you have a herpe...go to Mexico, it's cheap and it works. The dental work is really good too.

The surf started to pick up for the first time while I was jacked up on the medication. The second day it got really good, but Paul got kicked out of KM-38 so the Mexicans could have a competition. When we got there the surf was chest high at the most. On Friday it was getting head high. On Saturday it actually started to barrel. That's when we got told to leave the water. Km 38 is a really good wave, but there are car parts and old appliances in the water and you could get stitches before you get a wave. On top of that the TJ/Ensenada corridor is super polluted. We were only there because the RV broke down. As a rule I don't surf north of Ensenada. I tried to surf KM 36.5, but I was so messed up by the medication I could barely stay on the board while I was paddling. I decided to sit it out and wait till I was better.

After the bullshit with the Tortoise we made plans to get the RV back to the Desert, then meet up with the boys at the shipwreck. It was a two day mission to get to the van. When we got there we heard that a really high tide combined with decent swell had come over the natural sea wall and flushed Red's tent. Of course it happened in the middle of the night. It was a rare event, but nonetheless nature took a big shit on their night. They took it in stride with minimal whining. We made a b-line down to the Seven Sisters where the "Tortilla Experiment" came to its tragic demise. The rest of the time with everyone else is a bit of a blur, but at some point Joker ran out of money and Pinche locked into dick mode.

We had a few pounds of weed with Red's buddy in San Diego. When Pinche ran out of money he started demanding his money. Pinche and I had a bit of a stressed relationship over the years. With weed misadventures and the Tortilla Experiment, it has been close to blows a few times. It took one of us to say fuck it and avert disaster. That said, the departure of 3/5ths of the crew couldn't have come sooner. Before they left though Red and I found sweet waves and a mother lode clam bed which has been wiped out since then. We went out for exploration, checked out Alejandro's and came across paper thin barrels. Of course we didn't have surf boards, so we settled for a bucket of butter clams. We would have gone back for the barrels, but got a flat tire on the way back. By the time we got back with our discovery it was nearly dark and we were burnt out from the tire fiasco.

The camp in Rosalillita was on a little cliff where the sea floor had been lifted about two meters above the shore line. The edge was a kind of sand, mixed with clam shells and bowling ball size rocks. The storm surges are continually eroding this and washing away the sand, leaving a pile of boulders at the base. It's funny how you don't realize how drunk you are even if people tell you, but when it's on video you understand clearly. Well, one night we were partying around a camp fire near the cliff edge and I decided to film the crew. I was walking around the group and as I got near the edge I said to myself out loud, "Ok, watch out for the cliff." This is on video, when you look through the camera you lose perspective of the terrain below your feet. Not five seconds after warning myself about the cliff, I walked off of it. One minute I was narrating and the next I was laying on a pile of boulders at the base of the cliff.

When the camera came into focus it was pointing up at the full moon. My first word after falling was "ouch" then you hear everyone panicking and wondering what happened to me. I just babbled, "I'm OK." We watched that video over and over again and it got funnier every time. One minute I was babbling and then there was a sort of crunch as I landed on the rocks at the base. Aside from some bruises and jamming my thumb, I was alright and we continued on with the party, laughing our asses off all night.

Red and Joker went back to the States and Pinche went south somewhere. It was finally down to just Matt and me. We settled into our routine and entered the next phase. Jaime had come down for winter break. She brought her college buddy, Nate, down where he would meet up with his friends a few days later. Nate and I hit it off. We played dominoes and drank tequila late into the night. He taught me some of the Cholo Spanish he grew up with in LA. His mom is an activist and he spent a lot of time marching and protesting for the immigrant farmers. Over the following years we would get to know each other better. He hung out for a few days and then left with his friend Jim. After the boys had left, Matt and I had a fairly tranquil time just hanging out surfing and fishing. Jaime stayed for the holidays. We spent Christmas night in the town's warehouse celebrating with the locals. I ended up playing guitar and singing badly during the bands break. I had to use the bands guitar and it was a classical acoustic with an old pick-up taped to the hole in front. While it might have been adequate for mariachi, it was impossible for me to get a clean sound. The warehouse is a public building used to process fish. For Christmas it doubled as a dance hall. Everyone was dressed up in their best clothes and the girls all wore the

same thing, super tight jeans and jackets with furry collars. They all did the same dances. The girls were on one side the boys on the other. I usually have no problem dancing to anything, but the situation was stiff and I just watched like most people.

During the short walk into the pueblo a very drunk Mexican gave us a ride into town. He told Jaime she should get in the front, but she opted to ride in the back of the truck with us. You see, there is a long strip of sand that you have to speed up to make it through. That was why the guy had suggested she sit up front. Well, as we approached the dune in the road he punched the gas. When we hit the edge of the sand it launched us all into the air and we landed in a heap of tires and crates. We all got banged up a little. When he offered us a ride back out to camp after the party we declined. This was a good decision because he ended up driving off a cliff, about a six foot drop smashing his face into his windshield. All in all, it was a typical drunk Mexican thing to do. Most Latin's just can't hold their liquor. Granted, there are exceptions to the rule. The next day when we saw him his faced was smashed up, his windshield shattered and you could clearly see where his head had gone through it.

Before Jaime had shown up the surf had been flat for over a week. When her and Matt decided to go for a road trip down to La Paz, there was word that a swell was coming. I came to Baja to surf and decided to stay. This turned out to be a good choice. The surf was indeed picking up and I scored some awesome waves. When they got back they were tore up from an all-nighter at a super disco, where apparently Jaime had made out with a local girl and caught a nasty flu. She spent the next few days squatting out in the desert with constant diarrhea and vomiting at the same time. Matt was hung over for a few days and I had some of the best surf of the entire trip.

On the other end of this equation is the fact Matt spent enough money to cause some friction for a few days. In the end it wasn't so bad, but we got to San Diego on fumes. When we finally decided it was time to leave the Santa Anna winds were blowing hard out of the North and the van's gas mileage was cut in half with a headwind. In later years I learned to travel with the wind. Go north when the wind is from the South and it will push you, saving gas. When the Santa Anna's get blowing it is best to go south or sit tight.

It was when they were in La Paz that I had befriended a kayaker. He was learning how to ride waves in his boat and would give me any wave I wanted. If that wasn't cool enough, he had beers in his boat. Every so often there would be lulls in-between sets and we would pound a beer. It was one

of those perfect days when the wind was just right and the waves were getting bigger and better with each passing hour. I was sitting on my board as a set came in. I took off on the set wave, as I got to the point where the wave slows down it suddenly stood back up again. I was totally surprised and caught off guard. I tricked myself off the wave. As I was paddling back to the takeoff point a whale surfaced ten feet away. I could see the barnacles around its giant eye. It was the size of a softball and looked right at us. We just looked at each other, all we could say was, wow! I had just surfed a whale!

The next day the kayaker had to leave and I surfed the building swell alone. When Santa Rosalillita breaks the entire peninsula is firing and no one is moving around much. I got to practice on perfect waves that got a little bigger every hour all by myself. At one point I had caught the best wave I had ever ridden. As I was coming off the wave I held my arms up like I won a medal, but the gesture was lost. I was completely alone. That was one of the only times I ever wished someone else was there. I surfed till my arms were rubber and my legs where quivering with fatigue. As far as I know that wave never broke the way it was supposed to again.

## 25

As for the winter, it started to wind down and I started to formulate a plan for the coming summer. My plan was to go up to Crescent city, near the California/Oregon border, get a job cooking at the new brewery there. Matt would do dishes and we would grow pot somewhere in the National Forest. This is exactly what I did, without Matt, because he decided to stay in the Desert. The job at the brewery was awesome. They let me live in my van in the parking lot, where I doubled as security. The brewery had a shower and a washer and dryer. So, I was clean, I got to live a block from the beach, drink a shit load of beer and eat for cheap. During this time I also befriended Stinky Jimmy. He was a hippie guy that worked for surfing legend Greg Knoll. I got to hang out with Greg. I even lived on the Della II, an old fishing boat he owned, when the weather got really bad. It did get bad that spring. It rained so much I had mushrooms growing in my van. It was wet and cold and the Della was warm and dry, even if it did reek like diesel fuel. Jimmy was my surf bum buddy and we got to live at the beach for months before the cops caught on. When they finally told us to leave, they said we could go to the Wal-Mart parking lot with the rest of the bums.

I surfed nearly every day before work, grew a little patch in the woods and life was perfect. I was making plans to travel down to Chile to start a new life out of the States. Then the wheels fell off.

I had befriended a half Native American guy I worked with in the kitchen. He was selling weed for me. One day in October he decided to quit paying me. He knew I was harvesting and as soon as I was done he was going to take the four hundred dollars he owed me out of his ass. This guy became affectionately known to me as Nigger Aaron. His plan, I found out was to move to Idaho and before he left he narced me off to the forest cops. They caught me in my patch and they knew my name. I figured I was fucked and like a dumbass spilled my guts, they used everything against me. I plead guilty on the deal of three years of probation. I ended up with that, thirty days in county jail and banned from Six Rivers National Forests for three years. That was the ultimate betrayal in my life until today.

3/19/13 Cabin, El Padu, Chile. 11:55 am

I got up to hike to the cabin this morning and had an email from Jaime. She wants full custody. She swore she would never do anything to keep me from Never. I am completely crushed. I can't win and she knows it. I am a felon, an alcoholic and will have been out of the country for nine months. I have no house, no car, no job, and that only leaves me with spite. Like I said before…there is a time and a place for every emotion. Right now I am watching the ultimate betrayal play out over the only tangible thing in my life. I am thankful I have a cabin to hide out in. I have my plane ticket back to the States and will drive straight to Oregon to file for divorce before she can do it in California. I am not sure how that will work, seeing I lived in Hawaii for two years before leaving the country for nine months. I just hope Oregon will let me file because we got married there. I guess its game on. Sucks fighting a battle you can't win, but it's all I got. She is controlling my son's future without my input. I will do anything I can to make it as hard as possible. The final promise broken. Spite is too soft a word for I am feeling right now. I always said the only reason I had a kid with her is because I trusted her. I am a complete fucking idiot. Between her, my asshole brother, chicken shit cousin, weasel of an uncle and me being my own worst enemy, I am feeling very alone at the moment. Spite is a powerful thing. Looks like South America will have to wait. No matter how bad it sucks I have to make a life in the States, if for nothing else…to drive her crazy.

After Nigger Aaron narced on me my life became a nightmare. The only shiny spot was that I lived in Humboldt, but was on probation in Del Norte County, the next county north. I was allowed to send in a probation form instead of a personal visit once a month. I had a medical marijuana card and they didn't drug test me. They changed the law a few months later and anyone with a drug felony couldn't get a medical marijuana card. I was grandfathered in more or less. It was a good thing too, because I was suffering from insane anxiety and gnarly insomnia. I spent most of my time dry heaving and exhausted. I had prescriptions for both problems, but I am very sensitive to pharmaceuticals and they were just too much. Everything they gave me just made me feel worse. They kept telling me to stick with it and I would adjust. My ass I would adjust. All that shit just made me feel sick. I couldn't leave the county, let alone the country. I was a victim of my own stupidity. I started a furniture making business so I didn't have to get a job.

When I was having some of my worst insomnia bouts I had started seeing a counselor. Over a few months she came to the conclusion that I was waking up in the middle of the night, in part, because my body was withdrawing from alcohol. She put me on a regime of reduced alcohol consumption. I wasn't supposed to drink more than a few drinks a day and lie down at the same time every night. Eventually, I figured out that I could just pound a beer or take a shot and I would fall right back asleep. During this time I also started to become extremely paranoid when I ingested marijuana. I had been eating pot for years, but the combinations of madness and weed made me snap.

The first time I experience extreme paranoia I felt like the sky was falling. It took a second time to make the connection and a third time to believe it. About the same time I was using meth and balancing it with valium. My heart would be pounding out of my chest, though everyone suspected something, no one could believe it. I got skinny, but I still ate normal. Everyone thought it was anxiety and insomnia. While I was suffering from mental problems, I had other problem that weren't helping. My meth and valium trip only lasted about a month, but it took its toll. A few years after I quit, I landed in the emergency room with pericarditis. I was having heart problems at thirty-five years old just like my dad. My herpe finger had been giving me a problem and my theory is that the stress allowed the virus to infect my lung tissue. The tissue that separated my heart from my lungs became inflamed and I could hardly move or breathe. I think the

time I wrecked snowboarding and tore my lung tissue started the whole thing. Smoking cigarettes, pot and meth couldn't have helped.

Jaime, Red and I were fishing on my boat in Oregon when I got what I thought was really bad heartburn. I couldn't even load the boat, it was so bad. On the way home every bump in the road, every turn made my chest throb with pain. I ate a whole package of tums, but it still got worse. When we got home I had problems walking and barely made it up the stairs to my bed. Jaime wanted to take me to the hospital, but I opted to take Vicodin and wait till morning. By morning my heart was having problems beating and was laboring because I could hardly breathe. We went to the hospital and they shipped me, by ambulance, to another hospital, where I landed in the cardiac ward. I was the youngest person in there by thirty years. The doctor had asked me to use the pain scale and I told him it was an eleven. They gave me morphine and asked if I felt better. I told him I was really high and not feeling anything. The pain went away for the most part. For two weeks I had to take horse pill sized ibuprofens and I was mostly confined to bed rest. It was pretty traumatic for all of us.

After I got out of jail, Jaime, Red and I moved to Gary's house in West Haven. It was a block from the beach I learned how to surf at. The location was awesome, but my shoulder got really bad and the thousands of transplants from Southern California had completely ruined surfing for me. In Crescent City I was taking two Norcos, which are the big Vicodin, and drinking a few pints of beer just to dull the pain enough to surf. My shoulder had crossed over the threshold of usable now and I had to learn to hammer with my right hand. I am left handed. I can use both equally, but I write with my right hand. My temperature had risen nearly two degrees because of the pain and I had to give up surfing. Around this time I found out I had chronic sinusitis. I had been sick more than not for the prior few years. All of the symptoms were like a really bad flu. I would get better, than worse a week later. This went on for a long time before they gave me antibiotics and I got better in a few days. But this kept happening every few months and the constant antibiotics were taking their toll. Eventually I learned it was from the saw dust in my wood shop. Now I use a nasal steroid every day and haven't had but a few problems in the last few years.

It was while we were living in West Haven when the boys and I took some hippie kids on the ride of their lives. Looking back it's amazing we didn't die that night. It was Matt, Joker, Red and I and we had been partying in Arcata. It was late and I was way too drunk to be driving, but I did anyway. My philosophy was if you're gonna blow it, don't hold back. If you

act like there are no cops, they won't see you. We referred to this as the Jedi mind trick. We were driving north out of Arcata and we stopped at a market to grab some beer. These two hippie guys asked us if we were going to Clam Beach. As a matter of fact, we were going right by there. Suddenly, who ever bought the beer came running out like they had just stolen the beer. The guys decided they didn't need a ride, but Red grabbed one of them and someone else pushed the other guy into the van. The side door only opened from the outside, so they were trapped. They couldn't have gotten out anyway, because I floored it and blew the stop sign. I kept the pedal on the floor the whole way. 1965 Dodge vans aren't meant to go a hundred miles an hour. We were flying down the freeway when we approach a slight right turn and a hill heading down. I started in the right lane, but drifted right to the edge of the pavement on the left. One of the guys was doing a sort of meditative chant and when we hit that turn he was nearly screaming. I was afraid to let off the gas in the turn. I wasn't sure we were gonna make either. But the force is strong and when we got to Clam Beach the guys were terrified. They jumped out and said something about us being too drunk to drive and we shouldn't have risked their lives. Matt jumped out and chased them down the beach. We made it to the house. Let's say we never repeated the episode.

After a while Red had bought a house in McKinleyville and it was just me and Jaime in the West Haven House. A professor at HSU had bought a drug seizure property in the mountains outside of town and there was a giant house or what looked like a house that needed love. It was really just a giant shell of a house used to grow pot with a diesel generator. The original owner had leaked fuel into the creek and Fish and Game followed the slick up to the house. It was the largest indoor growing operation ever busted at the time. We got a deal to care take it and convert the grow rooms into livable space. It was weird trying to change my address to a piece of land with probation and I couldn't leave the property because it was surrounded by Six Rivers National Forest. Jaime had graduated with master's degree and had been doing field research. She was gone a lot and I was left to my own devices. This was the beginning of the end for me and Jaime, although it would take years for us to reach the point we are at now, which seems like an all-out war over our son. I suppose I'm not the only one bearing extreme spite.

One day I was down in town and found myself, as usual, in the Six Rivers Brewery. I was sitting on the steps by the front door when I saw Beck. She was gorgeous, 4'11" and in her early twenties. The attraction was

palpable. We hung out and talked over beers. Then I lured her to Red's house, who was out of town. We danced to 80's rap and hip hop on the satellite radio the whole night. We didn't have sex though we both wanted to. We did end up having an affair and that little beauty still has a piece of my soul. In a futile attempt to explain her, I acquaint her to a flower you can't pick because it will die. She seemed to fall from one ass-wipe to another and I was a safe sanctuary. That sort of thing made me feel like a God. I knew if I opened my arms gravity would take over. She never asked for more than I could offer and I was driven to protect her beautiful smile. She knew I had Jaime and she had her situations. It was a warm, safe place to hide if just for a minute. We didn't waste one. Back when it was hot and heavy I couldn't say I loved her. She wasn't a toy though. I truly thought I could show her it could be better. She is a beauty in every way. Anyone should have been stoked to be with her. I like to believe I made her smile.

One night she was having problems with her asshole boyfriend and I offered to meet her at the lookout point. The place is where the highway meets the turn off out in the woods where I lived. I told Jaime what was going on and she invited herself. During the conversation Beck casually said we had had sex. I can't remember why it came up, but the cat was out of the bag and Jaime tripped out. We went to our separate cars where I calmly told Jaime it was just sex. Good ol' fun that she wasn't giving me. She never said no to sex, but she never initiated it. It was like a job. Beck was like a warm bath. I have stayed in touch with her over the years. I've only seen her once since and it was as friends. I might go find her when I get back. I don't think she would have me, but I might ask anyway.

Another girl I really dig on this planet is Diana. We are really good friends and I wish I would have boned her on the numerous chances I had. All of our mutual friends always assumed we were having sex because we were close. One night we were partying at the brewery and decided to head down to Moonstone Beach. We were just walking along, the moon was bright and the air was unusually warm, though it was summer. Anyway, as we are walking along I noticed a faint glow in the sand where I stepped. I jumped as high as I could and stomped. The sand lit up in every direction. I'm not sure how long we stomped around the beach, but there was no glowing sand left when we were done. I suppose it was a one pot shot or took a while to recharge. We went into the sea cave held hands and talked late into the night. She is a skinny brunette with that sexy librarian look. We had a beautifully innocent romance. I didn't want to ruin it by having sex.

Then there is Carissa. One day when we were living in Blue Lake I smelled BBQ. There was a huge cloud of smoke blowing down the street. I followed the smoke and found a guy with his giant BBQ on a car trailer. He explained it was a Texas style wood fired smoker. His name is Al. After a bit of hanging out I ended up volunteering to help with their Fourth of July booth selling tri tip sandwiches. That was one of their first events and my friends and I ended up working with them on and off for years. We formed a close relationship and I still consider them family. His wife Carlotta is awesome and the family is so close, I find I am happier just being around them. I couldn't count the beers we shared or the nights we spent in the hot tub partying late into the night. They have two daughters, Chanel and Carissa. Chanel is a bit judgmental and down on heavy drinking, but she always has a hug and a smile for me. Carissa who was ten years old when I met her was very mature for her age, quick and perceptive. We became very close as she was growing up. I hadn't seen her for a few years and when I did she had grown into a beautiful sixteen year old. She is one of my favorite people on this planet and I would do anything to see her smile. Every time I found myself in Humboldt I would visit with the family, and then end up talking the night away with Carissa.

While Al and Carlotta never directly accused me of having an affair with Carissa they did bring it up with her. She swore we hadn't, but she doesn't think they believed her. Again this is one of those girls I just love to hang out with. We had flirted a little bit, but everything was innocent. I can see why they thought what they did and I suppose they know me well enough to jump to that conclusion. For the record all of those fears were for not. While I love Carissa we had decided it was all just too complicated and we were awesome friends. We are super close to this day. She has bloomed into one of the most beautiful women I have ever met.

Before Jaime, Never, and I took off on this trip eight months ago, we had made plans to meet up with Carissa in Central America. Carissa was living on one of the Bay Islands in Honduras. We ended up travelling together for around a month. While Jaime was jealous of all the women in my life, I think she was the most jealous of Carissa. In Honduras we finally had the final blow out that destroyed our relationship. It wasn't Carissa's fault. All she was doing was hanging out with her favorite family outside of her own. Jaime had just become too much of a control freak to salvage our relationship. Her fear of my relationship with Carissa was the straw that broke the camel's back. Way back in Hawaii we knew it was over. We were just trying to keep the family together as long as possible. One too many

bullshit episodes back then. I just really didn't care about what she thought anymore. Last I heard Carissa had fallen deeply in love. While I am stoked for her and no one is more worthy, I am sad because it will probably land us in different parts of the world. Like all soul mates, close friends and lovers the years do nothing to diminish the love we have for each other. We always seem to pick up right where we left off. It appears we both might land in Humboldt at the same time this summer and that is one of the only things I have to smile about, along with the reunions with my child and Stone. It will be awesome to see all my other bros and girlfriends, but these people are holding me together right now.

In the Fall, when Jaime and I were living up at Three Creeks she accepted a job in Oregon. It was a University job with good benefits and all the frills. I had hopes of finally getting surgery on my shoulder and needed to get away from the beach anyway. Even though Three Creeks was away from the coast it was only a forty minute drive and I still found myself sitting in my truck, loaded with surfboards and wet suit, contemplating surfing, even though my shoulder was mostly a useless appendage wracked with pain.

We had to snow shoe Jaime's stuff a mile out on a sled to get to a semi plowed road where the truck was. Her Honda Civic was completely buried by snow. I didn't see it again for four months, until the snow melted. At one point I was trying to find it. After digging for a bit, I was standing above the roof. It was a year for record rain in the fall and winter. I had to snow shoe supplies in over a mile. Thankfully I had satellite internet and a warm house. Life could have been worse.

## 26

I had spent the summer chopping the logs that the bulldozer Michael hired to fix the roads had piled. It was a good thing, because it was a really cold winter and the wood stove was the only heat source. Bears were a problem and at one point one had gotten into the wood shop on the ground floor. There wasn't much to get into, but it would have sucked to come home and find it while I was standing in the only way out. There was another door at the back out to the wood pile, but it was secure. The only thing that happened was it knocked over the garbage can and didn't find much. We decided it was time to get a dog. I went to the pound told them I wanted an older lab mix because I didn't want a dog for the next fifteen years and they had one. Once again he had come with a name, but it was worse

than Toledo's original name. You see, they gave the dogs names so they don't have to be numbers and this one had gotten a stay of execution because he was so cool. My only real requirement was that it was cat friendly because Jaime had Cotton, a goofy stoner fuzz ball she had since the seventh grade. We tested him out in the cat tank and he totally ignored it. Then I walked him and he was just stoked to be outside. His name was Wilbur, he was a black Lab mixed with some sort of pitbull. The only pit traits he had were his short legs and wide jaw. I called Jamie and she said go for it. When we got to the house he wouldn't get out of the car. He was my running partner for the next five years. He would rather live in the car or van way more than the house, that way he didn't get left behind. He had serious abandonment issues, but who could blame him. I imagine he was a bums dog because of the callouses on his elbows. As the days went by I had considered Sombra, Shadow in Spanish. But he was such a dumbass I settled on Bendeco, a misspelling of bendejo, meaning idiot. We called him B-dog because he was black and Jaime called him Benny as did most people. He would disappear at the cabin and you could hear him barking way off. Once I followed him and he had treed a bear. Needless to say we never had bear problems again.

As I expected he never hassled Cotton. He would only crap in a bush, a weird trait common to pit/lab mixes. He never chased our chickens and was loyal to a fault. He lived in the truck when I was at the bar and would escape if I left him alone too long, but would come looking for me or I would find him under it. One night I had come out to let him walk and go to the can and my truck door was open. There was blood on the door and on his face. I figure someone was going to go through my truck and the shadows bit the shit out of them. He was a freak about strangers near my truck if I wasn't around.

One day Joker was visiting with his injured wolf Creo, when the dogs disappeared. Creo was huge and could easily double Benny's pace. When Benny came back without him we knew something was up. Creo had a big ass gash on his foot and we wrapped it in gauze. We figured the gauze had gotten hung up on a bush or something and Benny had to go for help. We took off following him and a bit later Creo came running up dragging the loose bandage. For the second time I had a dog that was allowed in nearly every house I visited. He was well mannered and found somewhere out of the way to sleep. He was black so he got stepped on a lot.

While Jaime was gone I had way to much idle time. Besides the Beck thing I had found a video sex chat room. Jaime was butt hurt, but it was

completely harmless. I was hoping she would be into it, but found quite the opposite. It was basically a bunch of weirdo's with computers all over the States. For the most part it was uncensored chatting, but people would do all kinds of weird shit on it. I just sat around talking and trying to be entertaining. I listened to music and narrated what I was finding. When a girl showed her tits or more I would type "sweet" and it was a mad dash for those interested to find what I was looking at. There was sound, but for the most part it was typing. If someone was watching you they would show up as a different color. I was semi popular and if enough people were watching I would dance or do a strip tease. For the most part the object was to get as many fans as possible. I would just cruise through the people online. Maybe it was some tits or a girl masturbating, but a lot of times it was a dude's junk, and sometimes they'd be spanking it. There was no limit to the weirdness. At one point some freak showed up and did anything one of the resident hotties told him to do. It got pretty twisted and became hard to watch after she realized he really would do anything.

I had become part of the crew in one of the chat rooms and one day one of my friends stalkers showed up. She told me he showed up from time to time being a dick talking all kinds of shit. I was on him like stink on shit. As I said you know who is watching you, you also have a private message and public message option. I clicked on him and was like, "What's up cutie?" He said something like, "Go away freak." I would use private messages for most of it, switching back and forth while I was fucking with him. Publicly I would say something like "Awe common, you know I'm totally into little dumpy bald dudes" which he was. The room went into a frenzy trying to figure out what I was talking about. Privately I asked him "Have you ever had your shit pushed in?" He replied "Go find your own kind." Publicly I responded "I am one of a kind bro, don't get butt hurt unless your into that kind of thing." No one knew what was going on but my friend. She called me her savior after he left. We had a masturbation session one night and it was sort of some twisted video romance. But she saw me with Beck one night and she left the site. When I came back one day everyone was asking what happened to her, kind of implying I had something to do with her disappearance. I had promised her not to tell and didn't. My subscription eventually ran out or I moved and kind of just gave it up. It was a lot of fun that winter up there by myself, but I never tried to find her again. Thinking about it now I just might if I ever get a computer with high speed internet again, my next girlfriend will have to be into voyeurism because I am, but more than that, I am into exhibitionism.

Looking back at the stuff I was writing during this time, I was all over the board emotionally. Some days I seemed haunted, others I was ecstatic. Everything I was writing was raw. It's weird to think about how much I've changed, while staying the same… if that makes sense. The words were flowing out of me so fast I didn't use punctuation, so I left it as I found it.

Saturday, June 03, 2006
madness

welcome to the manic world of micah, part hermit, part social dragonfly and all absurdity. i confuse myself. in fact i am confused now. i hope you will become confused and find something you never wanted. my life has been beautiful. why do i feel so dark? why do i? why... why... why... that is my curse. WHY? am i so god damn curious? i can't focus, everything swirls and shakes and disappears... i know i kill the light, i want too, i hate too, i have too. i find myself longing for warmth. but i can't find it. i search so i won't find it. that's it... the search... the search... the fucking god forsaken search to feel. i am far from numb... i feel it all, my triumphs, my failures, my love and hate... oh yes always that. most of all i feel stranded, stranded on a planet that is stranded in space. cast me away... drowned me in your ocean, hide me in your sea. loddy loddy la. the song goes on and on and on. why? why then do i have to run from a gifted life. i am so lucky, in a good way, that i am complacent. yes i have trouble admitting it, but there it is. i want more. more life, more hope, more memories that makes me laugh when i sit awake at night. i am a nocturnal creature, living a lie in the light. i hide myself away. i reach out. nothing there. never is. any different. or difference. i can't relax. i pace like a caged lion. i stew on ideas, problems without answers. but i must know. tell me something i can use. give this wraith substance. it's only a wisp anyway. a shadow of a shadow of a shadow of a shadow. i can't even feel it anymore. gone with a vengeance. woe to he of earth and sea! i am lost. i know the follies of my actions, but i can't resist any more then i want to. yes this is the true nature of this demented mind, decayed at birth, malformed and jaded. enough courage to find my own end, not that of my enemy. my enemy, myself, my worst best friend, the fiend that starves for the darkness. so go now... kill yourself... find your soul... know what it means to be alone

10:53 AM
Sunday, June 04, 2006
ramble on

i want to write, but have nothing particular in mind so i ramble. i feel the surf jones bad. i am so ready to disappear. just like the old days. poof, like a puff of smoke. but no, i have carved a life that i despise. it is the best i could come up with to get myself thru probation. now that the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter, so are my feet ready to walk. it's been two years and three months of lingering. i have nearly said fuck it many times. i might be insane, but i am not stupid. time is short and i am feeling the weight of oppression. i stared at shitty waves for hours, contemplating. it has been over two years since i had to quit surfing. i surfed on torn shoulders till i woke up crying in pain. i took norco's like candy and drank like a drunk fish. in the end i couldn't even play my guitar, couldn't hold my arm up to strum. even after i quit i still surfed, sure i waited for a month thinking i would heal, but got hurt instantly. i know i should quit, but i am hooked. i have forsaken everything to surf every day. quit my job, dumped my girl and moved into my van. but did i surf. alone for months in baja, just me and the sea! those are the best days of my life. i am tempted again, to throw caution to the wind and blow. it is madness. but it is my madness. soul searcher. soul surfer. i am getting back in the water. it is exciting. i have been so fucking bored. simple distractions. i am near the point of tears with my manic mind. i am turning on myself. i must find release, if only for a moment. but a moment would be too little. i want back my adventure life. my cup pours over as i dump it out. i ask myself the Question. i never know how i will respond. it is as much a surprise to me as it is to my friends. how long can i pretend everything is fine. there is a world full of stuff to check out and i am here, for how long? the road behind me is littered with the dead, the forsaken and the forgotten, the road ahead is lonely, so i ask myself who will pay next time? my loyalty kills me. so many smiles haunt my memories. it pains me to know it is far from over. so many fallen friends and family. so many walks into the darkness away from those that love me. it's really just one long walk isn't it? now the tales told, these secrets we hold, i'll think about as i grow old and like this calm wind, i roll on again, carrying this load on to my end.

**Songs from my past**

Not much of a song without music

why does it seem so hard to believe
all i really want is to feel free
i look to you, you look back in fear
wonder how the hell that i got here
i am trying to see what you see in me
i am looking down but it is too deep
i don't know what to believe...
the voices i hear or the voice in me

in frustration i contemplate
changing times and changes made
i want to fly into timeless black
sometimes i wish i had
gone from cold embrace to die in flames
sacred things save but there all remains
your still here so hard to believe
come lets run, let's be free

why can't i find simple peace of mind
following this stream of time
when i need silence from myself
to cry away pain and drink to my health
and carry on like i've always done
running back to what i run from
to find you here, no one cares
wonder why we're the ones who dare

all around me people giving in
daily grinds got em wearing thin
supporting the machine, without wondering why
my friends and my family lining up to die
over populating this american dream
confusing what they want with what they need
if they'd walk to the edge, i'll pull them in
bring this nightmare to an end

Sustenance

if i look, it seem that i might find
i'm on the edge of finding peace of mind
it looks like love, i can't get enough
food of the gods, call it sustenance
chorus:
when is it love?
when i can't get enough?
will i drink from her cup?
will i call it sustenance?
in the dark, there's a light that shines
from the car, the car you're driving
just up ahead, the road will end
you'll be free, just like a child again
Chorus:
when is it love?
when it's over flowing from my cup?
can i ever get enough?
to call it sustenance?
on your sides, vegetation is lush
it pulls you in with a friendly touch
the forest there, it's more than alive
don't look too hard, might not like what you find
1st chorus again
out in the woods, find the key to your soul
ruins of a life you've never known
got to run, don't want to be the only one
the past left undone
when is it love?
when i can't get enough?
when it's over flowing from my cup?
will it call me sustenance?

Moral decay

i can't say where i am going today
all i can say is i'm not afraid
the more i know the less i understand
about descent and the fall of man
that road out there goes on forever
but brings us back to where we began

the past grows cold as the future unfolds
like memories we wish we could hold
from time without an end, we try to defend
but like a golden rule, it does not bend
some will find hell, some will find themselves
but most will drowned in their wishing wells

now i got to go, but i'd like to stay
but i can't survive this moral decay
screams to the sky, with no reply
what is the point of this page?
there's nowhere to hide, dying on the inside
hold my breath and hope i can fly

RIP bro

sometimes it's hard to believe i wrote this

The ride

i've sat in the dark, watched waves roll in
waiting for this world of you to begin
i've sat in the sun, felt like the shade
cold damp wind alone knew your name
i was cold and alone, begging for warmth
it was you alone who stood on my shore

somewhere inside the storm died
i dreamt of fire, deep inside your eyes
then it was you and me in this burning sea
no place on earth i'd rather be
together we rode the flames in
said we would do it over and over again

by the stream side in the dead of night
the storm rages, there but out of sight
the rustle of leaves, we quietly screamed
the wind brings the sound back to me
then thunder howled, lightning strikes
i'm still here waiting for a sign

now it's just me on this big blue sea
i can hear love whispering in the breeze
now the tales told, the secrets we hold
i think about as i grow old
like this calm wind i will move on again
carrying this load on to my end

Monday, June 05, 2006
some muddled shit to ponder

so i sit here digging into my brain and a find a nugget that spawns a train wreck of thoughts. that is how my brain operates. bang. so i start to see the cycle again. fuck i have done this manic rollercoaster some five times now in my 32 years. it really got started when i learned i might get off probation. that

fucking chain is killing me! then the talk of the sailboat resurfaced. man have i dreamed of sailing the globe. over ten years now i tried to realize that elusive dream. when i was high on it everyone else didn't feel the same. but i sold it all the same. pit myself against the world, against the sea! oh yes, storms and stories of survival, of raving madness. and now, the dream comes alive with everyone on board. all i wanted was to go to chile for a month. now it seems one moon won't do. here we go again. so anyway this cycle is my internal biorhythm, so to speak. if you know me well enough you know what i speak of. if not you'll figure it out. my sunny physically creative side has been flowering for a few years now, but as it wanes, my darker introspective side flows and i fucked up everything i've worked towards. seven years i spent learning my trade, building a business, sponging information off barroom floors. feeling good that i was affecting people. the boat and dreams of adventure have fitfully ebbed and i had some measure of peace. slowly the tide has been shifting, but i do not have much grace and run on instinct. so all this basically boils down to the fact that the boat and chile have really made me look at myself. i saddens me that i have been dormant for so long. that is my pain. this lingering long after. i want nothing more than to feed my curiosity. the world is the playground. once i was brave enough to go, but chose not to. now i am scared that i will chose to go.

5:01 PM
Monday, June 05, 2006
by horse

if i left where would i go? by boat? by plane? i always fancied the thought of a horse. ride that creature to hell. that thought brings me joy. oh the thoughts of a younger man. now i know the world is full of people, a man must have diversity. yes more languages always gets things good and confusing. that is fun. india then. plenty o'langages der'. don't forget Africa. and Madagascar. that place is crazy. gotta smoke hash in Morocco, even if it gets me killed. China has alot of people. tons o' mountains but no waves. Japan, sure. Indo. down under, the upside over. typing really settles down my mind. wish i could chill out. really fucking tense. don't want to work, so i haven't. just want to write i guess. well i did want to. still might actually. once a black man told me "actually" was a white person word. ponder that. once someone told me i would hold the world in my hand. that lady was insane. knew some twisted shit about me though, some voodoo bayou swamp shit. never was the same after that. really freaked me out. brain stoppage... wait. ok only

lasted a second. i really write this shit so you can see how my brain works. not that you care. if you do thanks. it's good to be wanted. i am a wasteland. no shit. i wear everybody down. most willingly. i am trying to... well you know what i mean. this brain is cooked. it thinks in circles and riddles. i find so much beauty in this world. always when i am spinning hard. i grab onto it, so tight i smother it. then i know it is time to go. avoid the flowers. the shiny lights too. might as well stay away from colors and pretty sounds too. libel to drive over the abyss. focus... find the center. calmly now. ease in to thought. too fast.

rrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaaaoooooooorrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr. my brain is a fucked up mess at the moment. so check in later.

5:55 PM
Tuesday, June 06, 2006
it is finally here

well it is 6/6/6 and i have waited for this day for a long time. now that it is here i don't know what to do with myself. it is a beautiful day here on the mountain. i guess my mood reflects this evilist day. i feel dark. i have given up the light. i try to find a speck of stability in this twisted mind, but it eludes me. wish i knew what i thought. bouncing like a football is getting tiresome. thought i could kick the psycho pills, guess i am, but it is a brutal trip. i am so sick of numb. i am not sure if this is any better. it makes for some crazy writing though, doesn't it? suppose this is the price i pay for my creativity. couldn't sleep when i was a kid. used to sneak out and prowl the night. i would sit for hours and stare at the moon. if you look long enough you can see jimi hendrix, i see it. it's his face, with his acid soaked bandana, his eyes are closed as he cries out the purple haze solo. used to watch bats for hours. the park down the street had a street light that would attract bugs. i had to sit in a tree so the cops wouldn't fuck with me. bats look so erratic from a distance, but when you look at them long enough you see they are lightning quick and never hit anything. you can stand in the light with hundreds of bats and they will pick the bugs off your face, barely leaving a wisp that they were there. used to take my wolf for walks in the moonlit woods. the things you see when you let go. had to take his collar off so we could hear. it has been so long since i've walked in the night. i drive now, like some unfeeling bulldozer. missing everything. sad that the work i take needs to be done on someone elses timetable. i slept through high school. i was that huge pile of

hair that woke up to go to the next class. by lunch i was awake enough to ditch the rest of the day. crazy how my writing just came out of nowhere. it has been years since i've been able to write more than a vague thought. the lion stirs. roar. i think i am glad. everything in my life suffers, but the words... they make me happier. for such a dark person i sure do smile alot. the things i have found. wow. you really get alot of variety when you can talk to anyone, try anything and have a million questions. so many people, i am too outgoing. i can find the gems and then... and then... i can't hold them. i am a freak. you'd never really know if i didn't want you too. but that madness makes people smile. even if they don't want too. i am a swirl in the system. i mix it up and people are glad, mostly. so what if i have a way of perverting everything. that makes me smile. so it does. so what will i do on this evilest day of the century? what i always do, try to make people laugh at things they wouldn't on their own. i can feel the raging lunatic ready to explode. suppose drunk is a place to start. i can forget things that make me sad when i am drunk. mostly because i am raging through the bars like a fucking tornado. hard to believe people still smile when they see me. those that know me, stay around far into the night because i can hold the place together by sheer force if need be. i have so much energy. my work and art, only take it so far. i need a good surf , or a mountain, the hot springs!! been so long, a night of raging animalistic sex would suffice i suppose. but that is unlikely. wish there was a distraction i could get into. so many things i want and not one can be had with coin. why do i work so much then? it is for later i guess. soon i will be too old to enjoy it. when i look out off my deck i see the trinity alps over fifty miles away. they call me. night is cooler above the tree line. the air is thinner and the mind perceives differently. i know it would take me more than a week to walk there. well i suppose i should shave my cranium. let my crown shine. well then... till next time.

9:15 AM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
human sacrifice

well that sucks. just wrote for an hour and then lost it. it was depressing anyway. went to a metal show for 666. the bruises are a kind of masochistic therapy. it was fun. well i don't want to write from scratch so i am going to bath in sunshine, should sooth my weary soul. sorry if i am a fucked up mess. i don't mean to drag everyone along. but it is better than going alone. rest

now. find something peaceful, watch it and don't smother it. space and time are not always friends, but friends are beyond space and time.

11:30 AM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006

i can hide but i can't heal
the wounds through which my blood is splilt
another pill to ease the pain
can't abate the throbbing in my brain
the clouds pour over the hill
the cold reflects the way i feel
dying for a simple distraction
something to distort manic depression

7:17 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
call 666 for a hell of a time

666 is the number
of the girl who brought me down
left me alone with my thoughts
of what i am, what i am not
she casts a shadow in the darkness
i am warmed by the chilling glow
like a candle burning slowly
always leaves me alone
666 is the number
of the girl who brought me down
like a hammer to an anvil
got my feet below me now
can't kiss her, can't resist her
she is too, too far gone
wish i could send a message
tell her i found her song
666 is the number
of the girl who brought me down
like a hammer, for my heartache
got my feet back on the ground

7:35 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
the pit

a hot shower does wonders for my beaten body. the soap makes the hundreds of tiny cuts scream. knots on my head don't hurt. but the right side of my body is crushed. counter clockwise pits. i fall alot. i throw my soul into the violent dance. my pants have zippers on the legs and i landed on them alot. even battered and bruised i have never wonder why i pit. i know. but do you. do you know what it is about thrashing, driving metal that heals through pain. it's real, people don't do it for fashion. not only is it extreme exercise, it is a kinda hypnotic state, and if you can let yourself go in the dance, it cleanses. like fire cleanses a dirty wound. it is better than fighting. everyone is there for the same reason, to animate their outrage at a world gone mad. groovin and spinning, rolling like a storm come to clean the land. bang, the lightning you just saw might be a concussion, but the thunder is the combination of a band's energy reflected in the crowd. let the dance begin. again and again.

7:45 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
just a theory

you might have asked yourself how some people can be so absorbed in religion that they become cultists. Well, i have thought about this and have come up with a kind of explanation. first though you are going to have to subscribe to a few other ideas. like god is all. Not a being that creates, but more of a battery for soul. like a cosmic clump of center. like matter, it cannot be created or destroyed, only manipulated. so this battery is like a giant complex soul. the soul of the universe if you will. this force has a fairly extensive view of the universe and understanding to some extent. nothing can really faze this force, it has seen too much. but in this complex universe there is always more to learn. how can that happen? branching out. colonizing. like a computer running every possible problem, with endless variables. so mortal life could be an experiment to greater understanding. no two people are the same. millions of programs. the problem is that with this cosmic knowledge we could not take life seriously. knowing what comes next alone would dumb down the experiment. so let's say that our cosmic knowledge is erased or erasing from birth. this could shed some light on the

search for god, peace, nirvana or what have you. maybe the veil over our eyes is slightly varied in texture. if you are in the right place at the right time you might catch a glimpse of something. depending on how you look at the world and what you are personally searching for, you could find god. really it might be just a peek at what we really are. it is familiar and inviting. someone could easily take this for divine presence. anyway, hope that made sense. having trouble following this thought any farther.

8:01 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
who reads this shit anyway? if your reading this you have bigger problems than me. so i am curious as to who else is pondering these thoughts, if you want your secret fine, but quite a few people are following my trip, so subscribe. so i can share.

8:27 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
vapor trails

this world is insane. what did i say that was worth erasing yourself from my existence. why then am i at a loss for words. come back when you can. poof like smoke. gone without a trace. the loss is bizarre. nothing to lose, but a void all the same. one unbelievable moment. is that all. a grain of sand in the ocean. fleeting these things are. so come back then. see what you are looking for. i need a new way to describe something that is like a sound in the wind or the shadow of a cloud across a vast plain. a smell, a scent to ponder and a vanishing act. just a bold stroke to what end. do you not feel it. the madness. come back if you can.

10:14 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
just kidding?
this all could be some terrible joke.

10:21 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
biscuits and gravy are good

cheese sandwich on warm sour dough. weeks of cultivation of wild yeasts. feeding them. forgetting them, they can hibernate in the fridge though. mix that with some good flour and age for a few days in the fridge. let rise all day. biscuits are easier. fresh gravy with pork sausage is gggooooooddd. a tomato warm from sunshine is good. potatoes with peppers, onion, garlic and brocolli is real good. fry it up in some good olive oil, melt some cheese on it, a fresh warm tortilla. tangy hot sauce. Yes, that is my favorite. homemade raviolis. been awhile since i've made pasta. broccolli and ricotta cheese. mmmm good. a simple marinara sauce heavy on the garlic. getting hungry? i was gonna say i don't cook much anymore. but that would be a lie. i don't eat out, seeing how i live in the middle of nowhere.

10:22 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
thoughts

thought you would save me
but you enslaved me
you mental raped me
and desecrated me
you invigorate me
you inspire, but your gone
you whisper, without calm
you never ever say stop
an absence when you're not
nothing worth noting
just a distant groaning
you should have shown me
not disowned me
you beckon, with empty arms
a whisper, of a doubt
a cloud of confusion
poof then you're gone

10:42 PM
Wednesday, June 07, 2006
was it just a joke?
a cruel jest indeed. meant to torment this already tormented mind. let the light shine. my bones are cold.

8:13 AM
Thursday, June 08, 2006
good morning cruel world

i wake to a shroud of fog. Above, the sun is working its heat through the mist. slowly the fog line recedes, mountains start to rematerialize, soon the valley will be in view. at the moment though one must wait. the fresh sun feels good. i know i should work today, but my heart is not in it. need to find something. wish i knew what it was.

8:29 AM
Thursday, June 08, 2006
follow

show me the way... i will follow
substance to fill this hollow
give me light in this darkness
a glowing ember... i would caress
tell me... what i need to know
give me the direction i need to go
give me something to ease my mind
a drink... when i am dry
a shelter... for the storm
a fire... to keep warm
a mystery... to ponder
a new road... to wander
show me something... i'll embrace
a memory, a footprint... a trace
another star to light the sky
the twin of my wonder why
show me the way... i will follow
tell me again... what i already know

9:27 AM
Thursday, June 08, 2006
by the moonlight

moonlight rages through the trees. almost feel like i should wear shades. b-dog picks up a scent and is gone. his pray crashing through the woods 100 feet away, it is fast. the chase is on. hope it is not a cat. B dog never was very bright. whatever it was he treed it. he will sit there and bark for hours. tiny creatures rustle the leaves of the forest floor. frogs croak in the creek bed. forest is quite except for the dog barking. he will be disappointed when i don't show up to inspect his query. the bats are friendly. they know i attract bugs for them. i like them. they are beautiful. so bright, though the full moon is still days away. a strange creature mutters a gargled howl. i've always wondered what it is that makes that crazy noise. the manzanita are tall. the smooth bark looks fleshy, like it should be warm and soft to my touch. but it is cool and firm. good trees. weathered many winters. slowly though they give way to the oaks, then they too to the fir, or alder, maple and cedar near the springs and creek. tree frogs call to b-dog. he is excited. probably a bear. he loves to chase bears. the black bears are brown right now. they will turn black again soon. the bucks should be sporting velvet by now. the night is calm. not a stir in the air. the sound carries far. b-dog returns to tell me all about his adventure. he is happy for an old dog. owls hoot just below us. the night time is peaceful. bed sounds good.

10:15 PM
Thursday, June 08, 2006
today is a good day

aching bones subside, the sun warms the air, a fire still would feel good. after last winter summer is glorious. the snow is nearly gone from the alps, the ground is dry. the tan oaks and chinkapins shed last year's leaves. finally sure they could survive the transition. my music has flourished the last few weeks and i am compelled to write. i have mountains of firewood to cut. but i haven't done shit for days. it is good to be the boss. except when the shit gets thick. i'll suffer later... today i heal my hurts and enjoy my solitude.

7:26 PM
Saturday, June 10, 2006
maniacal musing

hello cruel world. it is really not that cruel, but it can be... huh? Anyway, i really like dancing. whether it's a mosh pit or a swing gig, i have too much energy. especially when i am raving. i have been swinging like a pendulum. madness is insane. think it might be from 100's of acid trips. how would that be for irony? melted my brain to find the big questions. maybe pondering impossible problems in an open frame of mind, just letting my brain wonder the ends of sanity, has opened some new paths in my mind. now it won't turn off. i am too emotional for a dude. maybe that's why i am such a freak. the shiny spot is that people can appreciate my over exuberance. i can talk to anyone and amazingly a lot of people talk to me. it's fun to break down their stereotypes. kill em' with kindness. never let them get a firm hold on you. engage the masses, i say. the puzzle pieces are out there. but are you? the more people you meet and the deeper the conversation, makes for a more realistic view of the world. everyone has some understanding about this crazy world. some people just need to be probed to get there gears going. probing the world is the only way i can stay somewhat calm. it gives me a focal point. i need a helmet cam. just so you can see the things i see. i will work on that.

11:44 AM
Sunday, June 11, 2006
summer cold

i just realized that i hadn't been sick in a long time, till today. i made it all winter, of course i was snowed in, but i manage to avoid sick people well enough. but damn it if i didn't get screwed this time. sucky because i already took most of the week off. no pus here. looks like I'll be spreading the love myself. so watch out. summer colds suck ass. Anyway, really letting my life slip away lately. just can't get motivated. well i am sure you have your own problems, so i'll leave you to them.

7:53 AM
Sunday, June 11, 2006
this is how it goes

i am up. occasional panic attacks, nausea and compulsion. sometimes i find myself absorbed in my work, sometimes i am scared of it. at home i am lonely and wondering. in town i am intense and eager to talk to everyone. i mean everyone. i leave no stone unturned. i smother things i am attracted too. i lose the forest through the trees. i am sleepy, can't sleep. hungry, can't have none of that, stomach turns. play the guitar, then the bass, the drum... write something. food? not yet. coffee, yes i forgot coffee this morning. sit in the sunshine. always good. feel fine. work is good. food. a V-8, feed the animals. then confusion, frustration, self-annihilation. self-doubt and i am down. i wish i could cry, but tears are hard to find in this head. then some sentimental commercial makes me choke up. nothing even relevent, just a ploy to twist the dementia further. then we're going up again. compulsion, grasping, fighting myself. can't sleep, can't stop the mindless babble in my skull. want to run. doesn't matter where, just know it will feel good to run. someone to run to is always a plus till i get there. then i self-destruct all over again. i don't need a drug for this madness. i need to keep moving, searching, scouring for a moment of calm in the storm of my humanity. some good exercise, and peaceful sleep and i will feel fine... until next time.

8:46 AM
Wednesday, June 14, 2006
more babble

i wonder if you remember
moments... shrouded in fog
like the mountains during storm
or just after, remembering the sun
i struggle to remember...
though i can't forget
something to jog the memory
is it there all the same?
i affect and am there for affected
the change always seems sudden
though i recognize the symptoms
just symbols ascribed meaning
beyond the language of the body
disconnected from that past
i wonder if they are distorted
what really are memories?
stories we tell ourselves again
perception, to each his own
still i wonder if i am there
in the memories of this world
i wonder do you remember
the same memories as me?
oh yes, they seem hard to forget
as the mind becomes crowded
some fall into misuse
neglected... but never really gone
something to jog the memory
the mind is vast..
what would you remember about me?

10:34 AM
Wednesday, June 14, 2006
feel like shit... still

sick sucks! anyway, the real sucky part is that the surf is reeling. damn it. in my infinite wisdom, i know i have waited too long to blow it now. i ache all over and know i am prime to pull a muscle, probably a shoulder one. then i would be right back where i started. in mexico i came up with a sort of mantra. "have patience boy... get what you came for..." seem to have lost sight of the prize. hasty, hasty gargoyle. i have had a sort of epiphany, but i am having a hard time wrapping my brain around it. the short and skinny of it is... i have this friend, he's 40ish, anyway he has been single for a long time... in the infinte wisdom of the bar... he says to me "when i find a girl she is going to be very happy". this got me thinking... it doesn't take much, my thought was this; he is so tired of being alone that when someone really gives him a chance he will go down like good aged wine. he is mellow, kind and has a wealth of experience to work with. it seems to me that the first key to mating is to create a comfort zone where both people are relaxed and undistracted. older dudes can romance. fact. they have heard tons of stories and have their own, they have failure experience to ward off the stupid ideas. most of all i think it is the fact that they would appreciate the company, in fact relish it. after a while the brain becomes so bent on not being alone that you either cave in or find the patience to sit day after day waiting, mellowing. when that girl does show up, she is like a queen. don't think i really captured the essence of my thought, but it was worth trying, instead of forgetting. i think writing about it will help me explore this idea. anyway, sick or not i must work today. i am sure i will get tired if it soon enough, my energy level is on naptime and i have no desire to eat breakfast. till next time.

12:35 PM
Sunday, June 18, 2006
drunk and drinking

i am drunk and drinking
keep this brain from thinking
forget these thoughts i've thunk
figure i'd use the word drunk
wouldn't really call it a binge
just brain cells i thought to singe
then i hit a mental blockage
i know now my mission's accomplished
glad i'm home, don't have to drive
cause i am drunk... and i am high
guess i found what i was looking for
guess i'll search a little more

3:11 PM
Friday, June 23, 2006
eyes of god

beneath these eyes of god
buried beneath my thoughts
what was... is not... now
i am covered in blood
i sacrifice my myself
to ones that don't believe
no ends to the tragedy
from darkness to my soul
pages and pages flow
glad for what i got
blind to these eyes of god

9:24 PM
Friday, June 23, 2006
falling sky

inside my head i can't believe...
the fucking sky is falling on me
ode' to the gods, forsaken again...
please don't tell me the hooker is dead!
hands are shaking, drenched in blood...
just a dream i can't wake from
inside my head i can't believe...
the fucking sky is falling on me
under the weight, i can't survive...
i want to die, but i'm hardly alive
the red sunrises, i wake in a bed...
crazy thoughts keep crowding my head
where am i going, where'd i go wrong...
how to capture this fear inside a song
my heart is pounding, a fierce war drum...
what am i doing, what have i done?

9:45 AM
Sunday, June 25, 2006
thread

i lick my lips, my throat is dry
leather winged bats, absorb the sky
grasp at words, that escape me
i need a clue, if you got any
ponder madness, yes more of it
i thrived once i got used to it
slowing creeping from sluggish shell
out of the frying pan into hell
twisted thoughts, a twisted grin
lost the thought, once again
subjects, submissively transcend
like the voices in my head
screaming at me, is this it?
no, i growl, missed it again

here is the point to your urge
unhealed wounds always hurt
trees will grow to block the view
we'll build our walls like we do
when they finally reach the sky
we can sit and wonder why

The first snow of the year was only a few inches. I tried snowboarding on it, but I was scraping gravel way too much. But the next few weeks dumped one foot to eighteen inches of fresh powder every few nights. I had a mountain road zigzagging up behind the house and made a terrain park out of it. Of course there was no ski lift, so I had to break a trail after every snow. With nothing else to do I built berms and jumps and even had a decent half pipe for a while. With my shoulder being totally fucked, snowboarding became me and Benny's only exercise. We both got into bad ass shape that winter. He would charge ahead on the trail up to the top and then try to keep up on the way down. A few times I was scared and not going fast enough and ran him down. That's when I start building the berms. We had our own snow park and life was good.

During Christmas my neighbor that used his snow blower attachment to keep the road clear left for a two week period. While he was gone it snowed six feet. He called me when he got back to town and asked how the road was. I told him and he laughed it off. "Oh? Yeah, I've lived here for ten years, I've seen it all and it can't be that bad." Well, it was that bad. The chest high gate at the road was gone. He had to snow shoe in to find his barn had collapsed on his tractor. After a few days I figured he had to be out or at least close. I dug my truck out and went down the road. I had coffee in case he wasn't out yet. He drove a Toyota and his snow blower was just a little bit wider than that. I drove a full sized F150 and I scraped the whole way. If I scraped too hard it would suck me into the bank. The snow wall was on average four feet high. When I found him half way out toward the gate he only said, "What the fuck? That was stupid. Now we're stuck." I didn't offer him the coffee or give him shit. He was frustrated. I did lose respect for that guy. I was just hoping he would get the road open. I hadn't been to town in weeks. It took a while before I gave up on backing out. I ended up digging a turnaround spot. It took a few hours and I was thinking, "Man, that was stupid." It wasn't as hopeless as he made it seem, but it was a pain in the ass.

Before Jaime left for Oregon we had a little mushroom party. It was Jaime, Red and I. We had tried watching the movie "Underworld." Vampires and werewolves killing each other. While the movie was entertaining, none of us could say what it was about. We tried to watch it again, but as with most Mushroom trips, it dissolved into a maelstrom of confused ideas. It was during this trip, Jaime's last, we realized she had a wretched stomach ache. The same thing had happened before, but we hadn't connected it to the Shrooms. Again, as with most Shroom trips, most of it was lost in the chaos of the drug.

To compare LSD and mushrooms there are a few easy distinctions. It is easy to focus a group's attention on one subject while on Acid. The deep nature of the drug lends itself to philosophical discourse. But Shrooms on the other hand are chaos. Everyone is tripping on something different and it is hard to explain or understand anything. On Acid, I am a philosopher. On Shrooms, I revert to a crazy noises and erratic laughter. Any attempt to show someone something is interrupted by their own interesting thing. It is very hard to focus on Shrooms, where Acid is completely the opposite. On Acid everything is entirely focused and a good discussion can last the entire night. Mushrooms don't last as long, but the hangovers don't either. It's like that kind of focus doesn't tax the mind or body as much as extreme focus. In that light I can't think of any other thing profound I discovered on Mushrooms looking at the things accumulated throughout a night, in the morning, they are ordinary and uninteresting. I watched the movie again the next morning and it made perfect sense. Or as much sense as vampires and werewolves can make anyway.

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Meanwhile or a while later...Jamie was working at her job and looking for a house. My sort of adopted Mom, which seems to have disowned me as of late, for reasons I don't know, had lent me $50,000 for a down payment on a house. Jaime wasn't having any luck finding anything in Corvallis, where the University is. I told her to expand the search outward. Eventually she found a couple of options and I went up there to check them out. The first option was perfect. It was in Corvallis, we tried to make an offer, but it was sold. Then we looked at this little old farmhouse in Tangent. It's a little town, a city really, but with a population of only about a thousand people. We offered what they were asking and had our home. The

town itself was full of country bumpkins, but had an unusual attraction to musicians. There were hundreds of them. Good ones too. There was a little dive bar called the Dixie Creek Saloon. The owner wouldn't get decent beer and the bartenders were his granddaughters. They became my friends after a while but, I must admit they were bitches. They drove the place into the ground. Who wanted to drink being served by spoiled brats with bad attitudes?

In reality, that was the best thing that could have happened to the place. Eventually he sold it to Jake. Jake is an uber talented musician and turned the place into a music venue. I lived a block away and was one of the flies. They never raised the price of Jamison on me, seven bucks for a double. They got some good beer. Originally it was seven taps of Coors and Bud. I'm not even sure they have those on tap anymore. First it was one good beer and he realized people would pay more. After a year it was mostly micros. Life was good. They had live music all the time. It was mostly Country, Rock, and Blues. Then Dean Came. He was the bouncer/Sunday bartender. He became one of my closer friends, him and Johnny Cash. Johnny and I were mere working partners, but good friends nonetheless. Before Dean and I had Lard Ass…wait a minute I'm putting the cart before the horse.

Joker helped us move to Oregon. Being the dive bar guy he is he went to the Dixie first. Same as he did with the Logger Bar in Humboldt. It was what it was, but it was within walking distance of my house. It was there at the Dixie that I met Lard Ass. His real name is Brandon. He's a cool guy, but when he gets drunk he is annoying. First off he is loud as hell. The fact that he gets belligerent is not his worst trait though. One of his main problems is he will bone anything. He was dating this klepto chick who kept stealing him and his roommates shit, wrecked his car and he couldn't get rid of her. Anyway, at some point he had anal sex with one of the bartender's mom in a ditch. When he got drunk he would go on and on about it loudly. It was funny, but it brought the mood down. Even though I was a bit like him, he took it too far. For instance…there was this guy Baretto, one of those coolest guy you could know. He was the Fonze of Tangent. He was a wizard with metal. He would trade woodwork for metal work. I made presents for his wife, he built my brewery. Anyway, when he and Joanie got married they didn't invite me to the wedding, at least not directly. I found out we could go, but unofficially, so Jaime and I got dressed up, went and had a good time. A few days later they commented that I wasn't a drunk

asshole after all. I realized that they thought I was like Lard Ass. After they realized I was just a normal guy or what have you, we became close friends.

Anyway, Lard Ass is really a cool guy. He just needs to get rebellious when he gets drunk. But hey, I'm a drunk punk, Shock Trauma, onward seeking kind of guy. I love dragging a crowd along telling stories and jokes, getting more twisted until everyone is laughing about molesting animals or eating children or what have you. Then when someone says, "That's fucked up." I remind them they are the ones laughing about it. Or I am waiting for the show stopping moment when everyone goes silent and wonders "What the fuck just happened?" The main problem with Lard Ass is he didn't get new material. It just got lame after a while. Lard Ass and I were football freaks. I am a Steelers fan and he is a Bengals fan. Our teams are in the same division and have a rivalry older than us. That was the root of our friendship. Eventually I think he got sick of being called Lard Ass and quit hanging out with me. About the same time Dean showed up.

Wait… I am way ahead of myself. At some point my dad got out of the hospital, moved to Montana to live with my weasel uncle. He tired of the guy and came back to Oregon. You see, my dad had lived in a foster home in Sweet Home, not far from my house. He had signed up for the army there eventually landing in Vietnam. For whatever reason he ended up living with my brother Hogg about an hour north. He lived there for a while then eventually moved in with Jaime and I. It was really enjoyable to live with my old man, who was now sober for years. When I got home from work I would go into his room, the only room with cable, we would smoke a fatty and watch the McNeil Lear news report. It was a nightly tradition for months. He was in bad shape to begin with, but one day we got news my little brother had been killed in a drunken driving accident. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. The old man was tired and he gave up. He quit taking his medication. He went to Montana and South Dakota to visit his mom and brother, collect some of his shit and when he came back he looked like a shell of his former self.

Jaime and I had gotten married before he moved in. It was a spur of the moment thing. I think it was a Monday or Sunday night, we were lying in bed and one of us asked, "Wouldn't it be cool to get married on Leap Day" We had gotten together around Valentine's Day twelve years before and Leap Day was kind of our unofficial anniversary. We didn't have a real date, so it would do. We pondered the waiting period in Oregon and it turned out to be three days. Leap Day was on Friday. The plan hatched. Jaime applied for a license. We found a Justice of the Peace that would come out on short

notice and with about five witnesses, including Stone and Lisa, we tied the knot in our living room. We planned a reception for the summer when the weather was nicer.

Our super cool neighbor, Mel, let us use his field for the party. I roasted a pig in the ground, but the fire went out and parts of it were a bit rare. Luckily Red and Joker brought a bunch of fish they had been saving up and made fish tacos. We had an eight on eight football game, bands and the party was awesome. Oregon was probably the best thing that happened for me and Jaime. We had a decent house, a garden, good friends, and our quality of life was generally really good. My old camper-mate, Deerbone and his wife came to the party and stayed for a few weeks. They wanted out of the Desert and used our house as a base. They fell in love with Corvallis and moved to Tangent not too long after. Eventually they found a place in Corvallis. In fact, they are still there. Jaime's job had really good benefits and as soon as we got to Oregon I got my shoulder fixed.

Both my shoulders were giving me a lot of pain. I found a good surgeon and had an MRI done. I had him do the right one first because it was the least problematic. When the MRI came back inconclusive Jaime started to use the word hypochondriac. Then when I got the second MRI, the doctor came in giggling and told me I had a 260 degree labrum tear. That's the fibrous stuff that connects your arm to your rib cage, collar bone and shoulder blade.

He was adamant about fixing it right away. He said if I tore it anymore he couldn't fix it. I told him I wanted to wait till Christmas, still four months away and he was totally against it. Then I told him my shoulder had been like that for more than six years and he was amazed. The amount of pain that injury causes brings collegiate athletes to their knees crying. I did my share of crying though. He was tripped out by the amount of muscle I had built up around that injury. He told me one hour of surgery, three screws, six months of therapy and I would be 90%. When the surgery passed the two hour mark, Jaime was starting to panic. Nearly three hours of surgery, seven screws, and one badass doctor later, it works awesome. I have a little mobility issue, but no pain. The fact that I can use my left arm now took the pressure off of my right one. I can do anything I could before the injury. When I woke up from the anesthesia the nurse was pissed. All three surgeries I had, I came to cussing like a sailor. I can only imagine what I said. I bet she was considering muzzling me, she was that pissed.

They had given me an epidural and after the surgery we went and had shots. The next day was a different story. That shit hurt. I slept for the next

three days then started physical therapy. I had been stretching my arm out so I could use the computer. I couldn't do anything but sit around. I wasn't allowed to run because I might trip and use my arm to break my fall. So I played Total War and Battlefield for the next two months. I read a lot, but I have always read a lot. One night Jaime and I went to the Dixie, got trashed and when I woke up I couldn't find my sling. I lived in that thing for five months. In fact, it took a few weeks before I could wash my armpit. You can imagine what that was like. After a while I got permission to go to the gym. I just did the stair climber for hours and for the first time in my life my calves were normal size. My family has serious ass bird legs and I was no exception.

Anyway after my little brother died, my dad gave up. He limped into the wedding reception, but wasn't really there. He was hell bent on dying. I've seen some crazy shit, but the will to die, without putting a gun to your head …that takes balls. The last day of my father's life one of his testicles was as big as a softball. No bullshit, it was more like a volleyball. I got a call from Jaime. My dad's nurse or whoever makes these calls said I needed to get down to the hospital right away. I bailed from work and went to the hospital. He had been there about a week. Jaime had called him an ambulance when she came home and found shit all over the bathroom. I never asked him, but I figure he was trying to clean up after himself and just didn't have the strength. Jaime couldn't get him to the car. He was skinny, but he was a huge guy. I tried to visit him, but he wouldn't say much. We would watch the news hour and I would leave. I think me being there made it hard for him to die. So I quit going there. That last day Jaime and I were sitting there and he was in bad shape. He gestured for me to come closer. His lungs were filling up with liquid. Liver failure is brutal. He did the best he could to tell me his gun was under the seat of his truck. He asked me to shoot him in the head. I would have done it gladly. He had been so brave. He's my fucking hero. He wasn't the best dad in the world, in fact he kind of sucked at it, but he was my friend and I just wanted to him to have the peace he was longing for. The nurse was there and I asked her if there was something to do to get it over with. She said I just had to ask. Oregon kicks ass in this respect. She went to get the doctor. I told Pops I loved him and to tell everyone I missed them. The doctor came in, overdosed him on morphine and I was fucking happy. The old man had been through so much. He's a champion. He stared death down and embraced it. It took over fifteen minutes for his heart to finally give up. About a half hour later my brother Hogg showed up and asked for some time alone. It was a few

hours before we left his body alone. It was pointless. I know he ran for the light. I felt his absence long before his heart quit. That was the bravest thing I've ever seen. I hope I can be half that badass when it's my turn.

I went home that afternoon and remembered there was a sack of Mushrooms that had been hanging out way too long. A friend of mine was visiting from back East and he felt awkward to say the least sleeping over that night. When I asked him if he wanted to do some Shrooms, he thought I was nuts. He had never done Shrooms before, but I need a partner and he went for it. I know I might be the only person that kills their father then goes home and does Mushrooms, but you must understand the old man loved Mushrooms. His stomach couldn't take them for years though. I couldn't have thought of a better send off. I probably should have been sad, but I wasn't. The old man had been through the ringer. His death was a reason to celebrate. He wanted out and did it the hard way, a minute at a time. The whole trip I couldn't stop giggling and thinking about the time he quit his job and came home to a bunch of kids high on Shrooms. We had gone picking and brewed about ten gallons of Shroom tea. When he pulled up and saw the dazed look on everyone's faces he knew instantly. Instead of yelling or whatever we were expecting, he asked, "Where are they?" All afternoon he was wondering around drinking that shit by the gallon. Cheers Pop! It was a good trip.

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After the old man died we found out we had a 50,000 dollar insurance policy. My little sister got half, I took 15,000 and my little bro Monk got 10,000. We kept Monks money in a trust because he would have blown it. I told him when he got a job he could have it. He never did get a job. I used a chunk of the money to pay off our debts and there was still ten grand left. Jaime had wanted to trade in the Civic for a CRV. But as I told you I already had other plans. I used that money and the Civic to try and drive to South America. I took Monk with me, but he didn't have a passport and could only drive through Mexico. I told him to follow my lead and do what I said. A few weeks later we made it to Mazatlan. I asked him to quit drinking for the night because it was causing seizures. He looked at me and cracked a liter of beer. He was stumbling home from the bar and didn't need any more. I'm not sure if he didn't believe me or just didn't care. I left his ass in Mexico. I was pissed off. We had met a guy on a ferry from La Paz,

on the Baja, and had a really good night partying together. I totally freaked him out by the way I dealt with Monk. He wasn't sure he wanted to keep traveling with me, but I had a car and we were going to the same place. Monk got drunk and missed his plane. We had American Civil Services searching for him. He managed to get home, but the main problem was he didn't have a passport, so he had to fly into Tijuana, cross the border, then fly from San Diego back to Seattle. The only Spanish he knew was cervesa. The trip was a bust, but I came home thinking it was time to have a kid. Jaime will deny it but I had two stipulations. 1) If it was a boy I got to name him. 2) We didn't raise him in the States. Now I realize Jaime would have agreed to anything to have a kid. We took him to Baja when he was four months old, then from Puerta Vallarta to Ecuador last year, when he was two. We are getting divorced so I guess it doesn't matter that she welched on the deal. I did get to name him "Never" though. Everyone always asks why and I have a million answers. The simple one is I thought it was cool, unique and would serve him well. No matter what happens to me, he still has the name I chose. I've since had a vasectomy, so he is the only child I have or will have. So never again comes to mind. Not in a negative way. He is the only one from me. Never to be reproduced or attempted again. I love him with all my heart and being away from him has been soul wrenching. But I believe it was the only way I was going to get this book done. I am sick of building houses and physical labor. My body hurts and I am a decent story teller. Thanks for making it this far.

3/17/13 The Cabin… Rebellin

Well I got my ticket back to the States. I am closing in on nine months out of the country, nearly four months away from my boy, and years since I've seen Stone. For whatever reason, I have been reminiscing a lot the last few days. There are stories in the Desert that keep recirculating that I'm dead. I have family wishing I was dead for no fault of my own, and tons of people want to kick my ass. There's Casey in Crescent City for accidentally cock blocking him with someone else's girlfriend. Pinche Paul over a sour drug deal and probably for telling the truth about a story he lied about. When I see him I am guessing he'll be pissed. If he is, I am going to ask him if the story is true, he'll have to say yes… then, I'll ask him to kick his own ass, because it was fucking stupid and I love him. Grant for telling everyone how he left me hanging on a shitty plumbing job. When I talked the shit I was pissed because I spent four hours under a house in the mud.

But there were six leaks on the job. The OCK boys, especially Eric, he heard that I talked shit about him, but I don't talk shit about thugs for various reasons. Then there's Dennis. Little Keebler Elf looking bastard. He doesn't want to kick my ass, but I want to kick his just cause he annoys me. I bet there is a bunch more because I say it like it is and people get pissed off about that. At the end of the day, I am not hard to find. Looks like the major part of the book will be done before I go. This notebook is written in pen on paper and is full of notes on stories that I need to figure out where they fit.

I have managed the impossible in four months. I've started this thing a bunch of times, but never made it past the twentieth page. It just wasn't time yet. The bulk of it was written here at Viella's cabin, another huge chunk at Katuwira, thanks to Mario. Too bad he can't read English. He'll have to wait till I find someone fucked up enough to translate it into Spanish. I always said this book would be my retirement. I don't have twenty bucks to my name right now. I would be digging ditches somewhere if I hadn't found Viella. I hope my life is interesting enough. I've always thought of Jim Morrison's poems, in one he asks, "Have you had a life worth making a movie about?" I'm not sure if I have, but I tried like hell. The main person I owe this book to is Jaime. While she pisses me off to no end, she put up with a jackass for sixteen years. Thanks man. I hope you find happiness. I'm sorry it wasn't with me. Mainly though this book is for my boy. Never… this is your history too. We come from a long line of drifters. I hope you can break the chain and live a life with some peace of mind.

I've been pondering names for the book. Most of them are just funny. It seems impossible to find something that will make you pick this thing up and buy it. But enough about the book, you want to know the rest of the story, so here it goes.

After the ill-fated Mexico trip with Monk, I had kept most of his money from him. One day Kat called me and asked for the rest of his money so he could get a decent DUI lawyer. I told her it was a bad idea, but I gave them everything but the last thousand. Stupid ass got his third or fourth DUI a week later. I hate being right. He spent the next year in jail, got work release and one day when he came back they found a roach in his pocket. He's been on a self-pity trip because he bought the alcohol that got our little brother killed. More than that, he watched him die. On top of that the guy has low self-esteem. I love him, but I would never call him a go getter. Welcome to the world of ghosts man. It seems to run in the family.

The last night I spent with him in Mexico we partied at the Luna Del Torro. It was an old bar with a crumbling balcony right over the door. I could just imagine how man stitches were doled out by accidentally dropped drinks. That night we ended up hanging out with the most beautiful girl in the bar. All the locals kept buying me drinks saying "You're the man." But, as usual I was the jackass on the walk home. When we were about to go our separate ways, I comment how a girl was built for three dudes. It was a joke because there were three of us to one of her. It creeped her out regardless. I still feel bad about that one. If you are ever in Mazatlan that bar is awesome though.

So then Jaime was knocked up and at around eight months we went to Maui for our baby moon. We had an awesome trip overall. On the road to Hana we picked up this douche bag selling weed. I asked if it was bud and of course he lied. He wouldn't hand me the weed till I handed him the money. When I got the sack, for fifty dollars, it was wet leaf tied up in a ball. I had felt it before I let go of the money and figured it was at least bud. Then when I told him it was a nigger deal, he said "No refunds." I was pissed, he got out and I kept talking shit. He asked me if I wanted to fight. I told him I did, but I had my pregnant wife in the car. As he was walking off I told him "Aloha, welcome to Hawaii." He felt bad and gave me a chunk of bud. Instantly he found the next suckers, as he got in I yelled "It's a burn, dudes selling shake. Don't do it." The couple looked at me, then at him and we drove in different directions. I've always wanted to go back, find that asswipe and pepper spray him.

We did find the Queen Pool though. It's a natural pool on a cliff next to the ocean. The waves crash over the side and refresh the pool. We had an underwater camera and got some really cool pictures of her belly underwater. We went snorkeling a lot. Jaime had finally gotten the hang of it and we went out long enough to get back her legs thoroughly sunburnt. We hung out with Elizabeth, my single biggest fan and one of the only people who thinks this book has a chance. She has been a fan of my poetry from way back and always encourages me to keep writing. JYB had been on the island of Oahu for a long time and paid to fly us over from Maui. We went to the beach where Jaime got her belly burnt. Never was cooking and was kicking up a storm. He was born with a tan a month later. We owe the whole trip to Dave, one of the rock climbing kids. He worked for on an airline and used his credits to get us nearly free tickets. Thanks Dave!

Jaime went back to the mainland and I stayed and worked for a few weeks. Steve, JYB's boss, told me to come back and work anytime. But when I did come back, granted… years later, he left me hanging. Fuck that

guy. I think it was because of punk ass Dennis though. Little asshole will be your friend while he is screwing you over. It was while I was working on Oahu for the first time that Jaime found the job posting for a reserve in Ecuador. The thing that got the whole trip I am on now going. Anyway, I made decent money in Hawaii. I always considered it a place to fall back on if things went sour on the mainland. But for the moment Oregon wasn't through with us. Jaime still had over a year left at her job and we had a kid to be born yet.

It was a Saturday morning and Jaime had been having mild labor pains. She assumed it was false labor pains and told me to go ahead and go to work. I was a bit apprehensive, but ok, if you say so. I got a text message before lunch saying I should come home. When I got there she was in labor sitting on the toilet. I started a log of the contractions and they were all over the map. My thought was we were waiting for regular contractions at regular intervals. We didn't want to go in early so we held out at home. Eventually they started to even out, then Benny, my black lab, started tripping out. We figured there was something in canine intuition. We went to the hospital around lunchtime and she was dilated to eight cm. During the labor she got mad cause I was telling stories and was supposed to be rubbing her back, but I forgot and ended up patting. She freaked out. The nurses thought I was insane because I was not overreacting. Never Kalum Ditton was born around 6:00 that evening. I went to the brewery to celebrate, had some shots and came back a bit buzzed. He was healthy and mama was fine. The next day I was watching the Steelers lose and the midwife or doctor said goodbye and I didn't notice. Word got around I was a bit unemotional and later they asked Jaime if everything was all right at home, implying that maybe I was abusive. Whatever, I was holding my brand new baby boy and watching football. The Steelers lost the next six games and missed the playoffs.

Jaime got a bunch of maternity leave then went back to work part time. After that it was Never and Papa for about six months. I watched him during the day and trimmed weed while he was napping, then went to the shop in the evening. A lot of people commented on how good our baby smelled. Gotta love that banana strain. Hanging out with my boy for those months was the best time of my life. Jaime would get mad, I would forget to tell her about his first smile or laughing or whatever. But hey, I was a stay at home stoner dad. I filmed most of it anyway. This was the same time Deano showed up in Tangent. He was a fishing junkie too and a dad. We took Never out on the boat at least once a week that spring and summer. He was an adventure baby, mostly fishing. We didn't catch shit though, but not

for a lack of trying. In the four plus years I lived in Oregon I fished on more than a dozen rivers. I have driven to all the corners of the state exploring and it became an obsession to fish every river in the state.

Deano also came up with the idea of a battle of bands. Every Saturday Night however many bands they had would face off in a battle. After that any band that wanted to play had a chance. It was six weeks of competition and the metal bands kept winning. Consider that there were a lot of talented rock, blues, folk, and country bands, it sent a message. Metal needed a venue. There after the Dixie has metal once a week providing there's bands to play. The owner Jake realized metal fans don't drink the cheapest beer on tap. Furthermore, they drink a lot more. I love Deano for being my fishing buddy, but he brought the only thing that was missing to the Dixie Creek Saloon. When I first got there they only had shitty beer and no Jameson. Metal wasn't even considered a possibility. Within a year they had everything and I was in heaven. Jaime didn't appreciate it much though.

In her mind life was supposed to change because we had a kid. I suppose I did in a lot of ways, but I still had a keg of home brew on tap and stopped at the Dixie after work. This was when things started to sour between us. Needless to say, her bitching all the time forced me to rebel. It is in my nature. The more you force your will on me the less I respond. Looking back it was doomed. Before we got together when she was still with Charlie, we called her the Boss. The main problem was that I am just too set in my ways. I wish it wasn't so, but my partying conflicted with her motherly duty. A battle of wills was doomed from the start. One of my greatest weaknesses is my inability to give a shit. It sucks and I am not proud of it, it broke up my family. I don't think my partying was the only problem. For thirteen years plus we partied our asses off and when we woke up one morning to my badass stereo smashed on the floor we decided to make sure we didn't black out anymore. But the zero tolerance thing, well not zero, but less and less tolerance thing seemed to drive me over the cliff. Like I said, I am my own worst enemy and my own worst critic. Sometimes I suck ass bad. My little brother the shrink would have a whole book to say about this, seeing how it was multi-generational. I just wasn't ready to quit. More than that though, Jaime was trying to break my spirit. The partying was just the tip of the iceberg. Her insecurities, completely justified, were just too much for either of us.

Looking back now I realize that out of six kids only one is not a party animal. Well Hogg is too anti-social to be a party animal, but only Keith is not a clinical alcoholic. Maybe he is just such a self-righteous asshole, I don't

see it. My little sister Monica is the least severe, but when I visit we go out and get trashed. Both my little brothers, Monk and Dan, Dan being the one that died in the drunken driving accident, are or were lushes. That leaves me, probably the most functional, but most hopeless alcoholic. I can't even imagine being without a drink in my hand. For my excuse…well I have had a bunch of ghosts and the booze renders them powerless. I look at my son, think about the dead one and need a drink. More than that though, I need to forget, completely. Then I wake up wondering who's gonna be pissed off at me. But to my credit I don't really care. You got a problem worth fighting about I got fists. The fact that I don't remember just makes me madder. Sorry, but I can be an asshole, even though most people will say I'm a happy drunk. I am still a subtle asshole with well-targeted aggression, even when I blackout. My main problem is my solution; we can always fight about it. The thing is most people won't be mad enough to fight. I want to fight. I don't consider myself a violent man. When you come from a world of darkness and violence it's just a part of you. I've never beat my wife. Mentally I have destroyed her though. It would be easier to sit in jail than face the damage I've done to her. Eventually I would realize I just didn't care enough and have to set her free. Even if that meant being away from my son. Neither of them need that me. The only way out was to turn them loose and do what I could from a distance. That in turn requires at least a half bottle of booze and occasional violence directed at some asshole that deserves it. Maybe I deserve it and am just waiting for the person that can serve me my justice.

I know that two packs of cigarettes a day and averaging half a bottle of booze is hurting the ones that I love. But it's those I love that make me destroy myself. I have been so lucky and my life has become way too easy. I hope I can instill the virtues that don't kill you on my son. The stars above the desert, ice crystals in an alpine waterfall after the sunlight falls, alpine glow, hot water springing from the earth, clear mountain creeks and all that. It is awesome and it should be worth preserving my life rather than destroying it. Looking at that beautiful boy makes me want to save money for that bottle and buy a plane ticket to the other side of the earth so he doesn't have to see the destruction. I used to say that I wasn't the brightest bulb in the box, but I would burn the longest. I know it is true the brightest bulbs burn out first. I hope I fall somewhere in the middle. If I understood my passion for self-destruction, I could deal with it. In reality I understand it very little. The more I know the less I understand. I know way too much. It

fucking haunts me. I want nothing more than to go into the world and find the puzzle piece that shows me something more than I know right now.

# 29

When Never was around a year old the economy in the States started to tank. I went from making twenty five dollars hour full time to whoring myself out at fifteen part time. Every day Hawaii started to look more and more like an option. I talked with JYB and he said there was work. Pawling had gotten out of prison and asked me for his number. He went over and with a lot of bullshit I didn't find out till I got there, he was making it. He is still making it. He doesn't take advantage of paradise, but he is a punk and punks do shit the hard way. Soon after Pawling got there JYB had a crisis. He was so broke he couldn't afford the alcohol his body required and that landed him in the hospital. When Jaime and I had visited while she was pregnant, he and his girl woke up to find there was no beer. Two alcoholics, serious alcoholics with no beer, soon erupted into the stupidest fight I've ever heard. At first it was disturbing, but after a half an hour of arguing over who lost the keys, then whose room it was and so on, Jaime and I just looked at each other and laughed. It was ridiculous. But now he was sober. They gave him something to keep his body from shutting down during his DT's and it stuck. I took my last four hundred dollars and a plane ticket and showed up at his house. The job Steve had offered me never materialized. I bought a hundred dollar mountain bike and got a job at a cabinet shop. The owner was the biggest asshole I have ever met and every day I considered my last. I might have made it two weeks. I took my money and bought what they call an island beater. Basically, it's a car that couldn't pass safety inspection and therefore couldn't be registered. On top of that the past registration fees stick with the car.

I got a cash job working with Rex. He was a hack, way in over his head, but he paid cash every Friday. I worked there for a while then the owner decided I was a bit too hostile with Rex and basically laid me off. He had some other work I helped him with, but it wasn't cutting it. My brother had found some money my grandma had set aside and I got enough to buy a 1991 Corolla Wagon. It was old, but it was awesome. I got a rack for my board and there was room for my tools in the back. At the end of the day Hawaii sucks. Don't get me wrong, the weather is perfect and the water is clear and warm, but aloha is for tourists, traffic sucks, and there aren't any

fish to catch unless you got a boat. The waves are awesome, but they are super crowded with assholes. I made my living riding shitty waves in shitty spots for more than a year to get a little respect and fucked it up on one wave. The music scene sucks ass unless you like Reggae and I got kicked out of every punk show I went to. They only allow pussy mosh pits with pillows. Waikiki is fun if you like twelve dollar weak drinks and tons of tourists. I suppose I am a bit jaded.

I gave up my fishing pole for a snorkel, though there isn't shit to see, freaking locals fished the island out and most of the reefs are dead. It's a different story on the other islands, but there is no decent paying work. Every weekend I hiked to a new waterfall or explored some new part of the island, but it's a small island. When Jaime and Never got there we found an overpriced apartment in a nice neighborhood. The park in Nu'uanu is incredible. It has the only shady playground on the island and it has huge trees. We spent a lot of time there. We had to get out of the jungle house where JYB and Pawling live because the mosquitos are ridiculous. They were worse than the reserve in Ecuador, but not by much though. The secondary problem was Dennis. The first week I moved Jaime and Nev over he was drunk and wanted to get beat up. He wouldn't leave me alone. I didn't want to start my family's time in Hawaii with a fight, with Dennis. He was a total jack ass and I wish I would have put him in his place. The problem was I didn't know my place. He wasn't allowed in our side of the house. He didn't have the respect for an open door policy. He made asses out of both of us in front of my family. It's tough to forget about that. I suppose he made my one of these days list. But I butchered him in this book so I feel better about it. We moved from the rainy part of the island to the rainiest part of the island. I think it didn't rain for a whole day three times. It's warm, but it's muggy and humid.

I bounced through a few jobs landing a couple good paying ones. I worked nearly fifty hours a week on average for a few months and started to get some money saved up. Then Jaime showed me the credit card bills. I was pissed. Why in the hell did she let me think I was saving money? I paid them off and got another pile of cash. We decided to go for the Ecuador Job. We chose to start in Mexico and work on our Spanish while we were exploring new countries. It was good I had a good job, because my drinking really kicked into another gear. For her part Jaime was being a bitch and it got to the point where I didn't feel welcome in my own house. Every so often I would go stay at the jungle house just so I didn't have to deal with her. I threw myself into my work. I got up in the morning had breakfast

with Never, and came home to take a bath with him and put him to bed. For the first year of his life we only took showers. The first time we came home with him I took him into the shower and he just cuddled up and enjoyed the sound of the water and the feel of my body. When I went to Hawaii Jaime abandoned that habit and now he hates showers. He gets water in his eyes. One habit we picked up though was Poke. It's Ahi tuna marinated in sesame oil and salt. We would eat a pound of that nearly every day. A lot of people attribute the raw fish to his big brain and insane communication ability.

Then Antoinette came out. She was my raging buddy from Humboldt. We look like we could be brother and sister and party like the world is ending. She wanted to start a new life. One night we were partying and she found Club Asylum. It's a freaky club for people who don't go to sleep after bars close. It was fun as hell, but I forgot, sort of, to tell Jaime I wasn't coming home and suddenly she gave a shit. This drove me over the edge. If we hadn't taken the job in Ecuador and bought our tickets we would have got a divorce then. That was when I realized she was only happy if I was miserable. It sounds like I am exaggerating, but I truly believed it. She became a compulsive liar and control freak. She would say something and then deny it the next day and I know she said it. I just quit caring what she thought. I put up with her shit because I love my son. Soon whatever she wanted I purposefully went out of my way to piss her off. She was driving me insane and that was the only thing that would make her smile. I would come home exhausted, get treated like a wife beater, then I would get pissed and the next day she was all smiles. This lead right up to before we were to leave on our trip. I stayed out all night with Antoinette and came home high on Acid. Of course it was Antoinette's fault, not mine or Jaime's. It was really crazy Acid. Everyone else was on Ecstasy… I am not a fan so I found some guy with Acid. I had to convince him I wasn't a cop first. Then I asked where the Acid came from, he said Switzerland. I asked him how much I needed… he laughed and said just one. I took two. I was getting electrical shocks in my fingertips the next morning. Jaime dressed down Antoinette and a few days later we flew to PV.

Overall the trip was going extremely well. Never travelled like a champion and the only thing he wanted was kids to play with. We made it down to Puerto Escondido, my favorite area in Mexico, maybe the world. We found an apartment and then she got a parasite. She was in bad shape. She started to feel a little better and I decided to head to Chacahua. It's an island village on the beach. You have to take a boat across a lake to get there. It was right before my birthday and I scored sweet surf and partied

with a huge group of kids from Mexico City. It really started when I left my wallet in the truck that takes you from the boat to the village. I noticed when I went to pay for my room at this beach side resort. The owner's nephew spoke English and took me running through back yards to catch the truck. I gave the guy a hundred pesos before I realized he had already taken two hundred pesos. But hey, I got my wallet back with my bank card and most of my cash. I would have been fucked. I wouldn't have had money to get back to Puerto. I offered to buy the guy that helped me a beer and then another and he split leaving the second still full. He came back a bit later and I had already given it to an Aussie chick. Later that evening he was wheeling a wheel barrow full of wood. I asked him what was up. He said he was gonna start a bonfire on the beach. The dude started it in the wheel barrow. Soon there was a shit load of people there and I befriended Victor and Guillermo. The fifteen or so Gringos bailed as soon as the party crashers showed up.

Soon the fire started to burn. I think he got it going and meant to dump it out, but forgot. Anyway I seemed to be the only one noticing the reek of burning rubber as the tire caught fire. I started burying the wheel in sand and Victor was the only one who helped. After we got it under control he offered to smoke a joint. I asked if I could buy some and he said if you want to smoke just ask and we would smoke. We ended up hanging out late into the night. A bunch of thugs showed up to crash the party. They were being obnoxious and talking shit. I was sizing them up. Some of them were really big. None were our size. I asked Victor about them and he said "It's time to make new friends." Smart kid. That's what we did. They offered cold beers and a bottle of tequila. I took both and guzzled both. The thugs mumbled some shit about the mafia and I told them I thought we were drinking? They took the challenge and tried to match me. They were gone within an hour leaving a bunch of beer. Fucking lightweights. There were a bunch of cute girls and I was wishing I wasn't married. I decided to leave the next morning. I was going to stay a few days, but Jaime was affecting me and she wasn't even there. I loaded my shit in the morning to go and the surf looked good. The day before, a bunch of dicks were playing wave snake games and I'm sick of that shit from Hawaii. But the waves looked good and no one was out. I had scored half a dozen good waves before the dicks even realized what was happening. They bombed out there and I came in. Just as I did Guillermo and Victor got up. I traded Facebook info with them and then split. I am still in touch with Victor. I really want to go to Mexico City now that I have friends there.

When I got back to the apartment I met Carlos' family. They were hanging out by the pool. There were two older teenagers and their parents. They were from Pueblo, Mexico. Where it turns out Spanish was the second language. The mom didn't speak English or Spanish, though she had dark skin and dark hair she spoke German. That's right, there is a Volkswagen factory there and the first language is German. Anyway, we were hanging out talking and the dad, I forget his name, offered up some Cuba libres. That's when I realized I don't care for Tequila. That led to me buying the first bottle of rum out of who knows how many, that I drank on this trip over the next eight months. There's been some bad ones, but managed to choke them down anyway. We ended up drinking most of his bottle before he started babbling. In the end I got an invitation to Pueblo, which is where the war that was fought on Cinco de Mayo happened and is just now catching on in some parts of Mexico. From Puerto we traded the heat of the beach for the cool crisp air of San Cristobal. At 10,000 feet it never really gets hot. Southern Mexico is riddled with waterfalls and caves. The one we checked out there was Aqua Azul. I'm not sure how many waterfalls there are, but you hike over a kilometer and visit one after another. There are a few swimming holes and Never found himself a little natural waterslide that occupied him for hours. He was such a trooper. He was awesome on the buses and only wanted kids to play with. He did start peeing the bed. Not really sure what that was all about. It got to a point where we would wake up at 2:00 am and take him to the bathroom. He had been out of diapers for months. Just all the changes and stress from traveling I suppose. We drove back to San Cristobal at night and there were thousands of fireflies in the trees for hours. It was really incredible to see.

From San Cristobal we headed to Guatemala where we were to meet up with Carissa and went to Lanquin. It turned out she got sick and was hung up in Antiqua. We headed straight to Lake Atitlan and she ended up meeting us there. Before she got there, we had taken a boat to one of the smaller villages. On the way back we met a gringa lady that told us about El Zonte in El Salvador. She invited us over for play time and a movie, but we ended up getting drunk and smoking joints while Never played with two Mayan kids they had adopted. I wish I had their information because they were really fun and heading back to the States. Then we decided to head back to the beach. This time in El Salvador.

# 30

El Zonte's turned out to be a never ending party and at one point I was on the patio above the bar trying to convince some Canadian girls to take their tops off. I figured they had their boobs almost all of the way out anyway, it was worth a try. No luck, but they were good sports about it. At some point I jumped off of the same second story balcony into the swimming pool splashing everyone at the bar next to it. Jaime had been going to bed with Never, so I partied late into the night the whole time I was there. Carissa was bombed by the local studs that preyed on tourists and at one point she asked me to rescue her. El Salvador is pretty hot and I just wore board shorts. I was in good surf shape and covered in tattoos and no one said anything when I said that was enough.

The locals at El Zonte pretty much surf the shitty point left of the river mouth. I understand why. When I paddled out to the right during a rising tide and a building swell I got pushed hundreds of yards down the beach. I was almost outside and a wave crashed down on my head, pinned me down and then sent me packing. I got the scraps that gave me the staff infection and abscess, plus destroyed my feet on the way back. The beach is covered by millions of baseball sized cobble stones. The surge of the surf pushes them up the steep beach then sucks them back down. There is a big ass cliff keeping you from climbing up to the road and my feet got mangled on the twenty minute walk back. I learned a good lesson that day. Find a way up the damn cliff. The dicks at the hotel next to El Zonte's were amused anyway. Later that day though I did make it out and got my lickings again learning how to drop into the dredging wave. The drop is super steep and you get so much speed you can't really make a bottom turn for a few yards down the line. I was dropping in, carving to the bottom and blasting off the top. You just got going so fast on the drop. It took me about five waves to figure it out. Then I started scoring. As soon as it looked easy all the lookers paddled out. They soon figured out the same thing I did, it was a bitch. Eventually it got crowded for my tastes anyway. There were those assholes that think they can get underneath you or back paddle you and nothing will happen. As soon as I started yelling at people I realized it was past time to get out. We hired Alex the owner to take us up to San Salvador so we could catch a bus to Honduras in the morning. Driving away in the dawn the next morning was so sad. It was peeling 8 foot faces and glassy. I nearly cried, but my jaded side knew the assholes would just piss me off. We

were late for the bus, but it waited because it was taking fifteen minutes to print out each ticket. We were in line for an hour and a half. Then the bus didn't have air conditioning and was overheating the whole way. It was fucked. We were boiling, they ran out of cold water and the meal they served sucked. The bus ended up being three hours late. While the trip through Central America was only six months ago, it seems like years and the details are a blur. The countries blur together and it's hard to put the time in order. It doesn't help that I think in Spanish a lot, especially after talking only in Spanish for a night.

From El Salvador we headed up to Northern Honduras. Carissa had been living on one of the Bay Islands. Though I would love to have gone, we were killing the budget and Carissa wanted to see other places anyway. We decided on the only microbrewery in Honduras and possibly the only one we could find with rooms in Central America. The owner is American and caters to people who want to hike, swim and visit natural places. We hiked up the road to a finka, or coffee plantation, thinking we were gonna go for a swim in a cool spring. Well, it was forbidden and we ended up in a creek though I think they call it a river. When it rains, Josh the resident guide offered tubing, but I'm not really into tubing. Give me a canoe and I am in, but a tube just sounds uncomfortable and uncontrollable. I guess I am a bit more interactive.

Carissa and I were hungry for an adventure and decided to ask Josh what he had been thinking about doing. We decided on an overnight trip through the jungle to a cave and some hot springs. Before we got too far into the planning, I thought I should ask Jaime. I asked, she said it was fine and we decided to spend the next day preparing and pouring over the map. The map was made by the CIA fifty years ago. Most of it is probably wrong, but it's a map. About the middle of the next day Jaime threw a fit claiming she never said it was cool. In fact, her story was she said I could go, but she wouldn't be happy about it. My version is she said I can't stop you, so go ahead, have fun. Normally this wouldn't be an issue, but with a two year old it's a different story. Anyway I thought it would be cool if she went and did something alone to be fair. I wanted to leave for two possibly three days. She went bird watching in the morning then about midday asked me if I was really gonna go after she said she did not want me to. I lost it. I was ready for a divorce then and there. I told everyone I couldn't go and decided to hang out with Jaime and be an asshole. Which I did for the next month. I still get pissed off just thinking about it. She said she was feeling like a third wheel. I told her she was acting like one. At the end of the day I figure she

was jealous of Carissa. I hadn't seen her for more than a week in four years and was trying to make up for lost time. I told Jaime I was done. I even tried to get my own room, but that didn't work out so well. I settled on my own bed. Needless to say things were getting awkward from that point on. I just wanted to get to Ecuador. Then I started to get sick.

Before my staff infection got too bad, I spent the day with Carissa. We rented a shitty row boat with the oars tied on with bailing twine. We rowed, or I rowed for about an hour or a bit more. We found a secluded point and tied the boat up. There was a big beach on the lake but there were a bunch of people having a party so we paddled on. Our little spot was good for some swimming and had some shade to talk. We actually had very little time alone. Though we had talked it was always with a lot of people around. She was cool while I vented on all the things that had been bothering me. I realized then how much I missed her and all my close friends for that matter. As an aside…if you are sitting around a campfire and you hear something odd, then someone says, "Don't look up." Don't look up! Or you might find, as Carissa did, that a hard ass avocado will give you a fat ass black eye.

The food at the brewery was alright though a bit expensive. So we ate most of our meals or at least a good share of them down the street. Baliatas are cheap and filling. Really too cheap and it is easy to attempt to live on them. At one point we befriended the lady that owned the stand and cooked omelets for her. It's the same as baliata, but with eggs instead of tortillas. Sitting here in Chile they sound pretty good right now. I guess every country has their cheap native dishes. In the States it's a cheeseburger. The brewery had those though and the normal sandwiches and food Americans were used to. The beer at the brewery was tasty, though it was hard to get drunk on. My bottle of rum saved us all. There were a bunch of guys working on the hotel part and a security guy that needed to take a nip every now and then. At some point there was a two liter of Coke Cola and I don't remember much. The rum was gone, but there was Coke left, the soft drink. I spent my last night hanging out with Josh. We sat in the garden and talked about our dreams, where we've been and what we learned there. The conversation must have been about four hours. It was awesome and sad to think I got such a late start. I never really made it past TJ until I was in my thirties. I did tour the States a lot and that is tough considering mainly only well off kids usually get to tour the States. The budget for travel in the States is double or even triple than most of Latin America. On a global scale, the US is the worst place to travel. You need a car to get anywhere but the major cities. I think the oil companies don't want decent mass transit. They

sell more gas when everyone drives their own cars. In Latin America you can get anywhere except the most ridiculous places by bus, micro, collectivo or at worst a taxi, even if it is just some dude with a car on his way home. Since I am rambling, why do Americans use ounces broke into grams? We should have a unified non metric system or else what's the point of being different. Granted a lot of the world sells a fifth of a gallon of booze as 750ml and you can usually find a pint in Europe, always in the UK, I think.

3/28/13 EL Padu (the little deer) 9:40 pm

Ok, this is a tangent, need a journal entry. It seems I got a bunch of shit on my mind that needs writing down. Well just thinking about what's on my mind took a whole cigarette. From the top then. I went to town today for less than an hour. I was at the hostel and took a rum break. On the Patio were two Americans from LA, a guy and a girl. They were travelling together, but had met on the way. Anyway Eilleen was mesmerizing. She was a bit skinny and not a supermodel, but her eyes were like black holes. I suppose this is a new bottom, but maybe not, people from LA seeming interesting…Really. I suppose that place has as many interesting people as the next. But LA is the last place I want to find myself.

Maybe it's the fact I swore off women while I write this book which is pushing four months and the only sex I had before that was with Jaime. I had to satisfy her so I could have sex. It was more like complicated masturbation. I'm not even sure you can buy porn in Chile. But I've seen a lot of girls on my trip and that one affected me enough to get a journal entry. As an aside, I was gonna leave the girls at the hostel out of the book, but they are useful for perspective. Viella, my boss and owner of the hostel and cabin I live in, is the provider for most of my rum, cigarettes and all of my food. She's an awesome person, but does not like competition. I tend to attract a crowd and she's compelled to try to embarrass me in front of it. I can live with the "You drink too much. You smoke too much," spiel. Granted nothing but love for all the things she's done for me, but she pisses me off to no end. I used to ignore it, but after more than seven weeks I can't deal with it anymore. I just want to leave here. My son is in Sacramento, so I'll go back to the States. Viella worked for days searching for tickets for the plane and bus. Nothing but thanks for helping out, so I could work on that giant list of shit.

Francesca… we had a rough start, but could see myself on top of her. Problem is Pablo, he's a cool guy, I wouldn't do it. Well, maybe she's not the

brightest bulb in the box, nor the most luminescent, but now that I know her she really is a sweet heart, though she started off as a bitch. Maybe it's the Italian accent, who knows. There was Addi a while back, but the only interaction I had with her was telling her I was rooting for her boobs to fall out of her skimpy shirt. That went over like a brick from a hot air balloon. So she only gets to share a paragraph.

As an aside to an aside what's it mean when a carrot has a green core? They have been at the cabin for months. Are they growing again? Anyway… There's Jesse, Me Hermana. I really love Jesse. She's the local help at the hotel. In reality she's the anchor. Without her the rest of the people would run away. She always got a genuine smile and coffee for me in the morning. Before I leave I am gonna give her a big kiss on the lips then tell her thanks. To sum it up, thanks for the smile in the morning, though your life is kicking your ass.

Sandra, the non-judgmental German. She's beautiful, but always has a frown even when she's smiling. Her boyfriend Martin is an engineer and always fun to hang out with. Sandra was the rock the hostel was always resting on. Without her it is a drift. Right now the seas are calm, tomorrow…who knows? Not me… I'll be gone. I am of the opinion Germans are the most rigid people in the world. The Finns are the least social, but Germans need order. Sandra excels at order. Failure or even criticism kills both her and Martin. At a party last weekend Martin charged on the Bar BQ. Viella with her complete lack of sensitivity made a scene. She bitched they had cooked too much food too early and they refused to continue. Good call guys, I thought you were doing a great job.

I guess that leaves Popeye…I wanted to leave her out because of spite. History needs bad girls too I guess. At first I thought I found a soul sister. Our humor was spooky similar and we both despise the States. She's a Canadian that hates America and I'm American, though I am an anti-American government American. She might or might not bathe like me and she is mostly alright with brutal comradery. I say this mostly because of one incident. I was running around like a chicken with my head cut off and pitching a fit and she said "Quit whining." I said "You're the one sitting on your ass." Which she was. She was cool as a cumquat for days. One day I asked her to share next time she smoked some weed. She replied, that she didn't respond well to negativity. Fair enough…you like petty grudges…You fancy yourself a teacher? Micah's honest assessment is as follows. Popeye, because she sounds like Popeye when she laughs…won't even try to capture it in print. She is very mannish, probably not a lesbian, but maybe…outside

chance… dreads to her ass that are causing her to go bald and she has inconspicuous breasts. That's gold. She comes off really hard, she's been living in Santiago more than not, for four years. But in my opinion (which is all that matters…because it's my book) She's a spoiled trust fund kid living on money from her dad back in Canada. I love the fact she can't retort. When you wanna fuck with people you should always avoid guys writing autobiographies. Anyway, she's much too sensitive for the bad ass appearance, though she is quiet and calculating. I appreciate that. Maybe if she had bigger boobs, a better face and could wear pants that made her ass appealing, then maybe, we could have hung out. But as it stands the back porch is mine and she's hitchhiking on my personality. I can think of other stuff to make her less appealing, but she doesn't need my help.

I also met Harri, my Finnish brother from another mother. He had come for a night on his way South, but we ended up partying till 4:00 in the morning. He and his girlfriend couldn't get up in time to check out of their room. This went on for three nights and he decided to stay for the party Viella threw at the hostel. We sat up drinking rum and babbling the entire time. Eventually I had to go back to the cabin and he made his escape.

Overall the hostel has been a hostel. There is no room for an alpha male and I will be grateful to leave. What's that got to do with the chick back in LA? Everything. For two months I've been a whipping boy. Most girls look at me like I'm crazy. The women at the hostel are a mixed bag for sure, but completely beyond me. Eilleen had me from the first sound. I didn't even want to know her. I just liked to look at the simple beauty of her face. Her eyes were vacuums and the sideways tilt of her face made me believe she was listening. It's been an awesome and crazy life. For men we need a mate that can equal us. You could be simple or complicated or constricted or you can be free. Free to follow life and trail those that came before. Maybe you can catch up to them, but for me I just want to smile, drink, smoke, tell stories, and hear what life is about. It's a trip for sure. You never know what will come out of you next. That's the fun of it. When people from LA seem interesting you've been out of the States for just the right amount of time. The fact is everyone is interesting. How did you get here? That is the question. You know how I got here. I ask you… "Have you had a life working making a movie about?" She'd look good in a movie. That Asian from America. It hasn't been so lonely living alone. Smile when you can or remember when you did. I only have two nights left here, but I finished the book mostly. Life has been worse.

# 31

From the brewery we left Carissa to go to Nicaragua. She was going back to Utilla to live on her friend's farm. Jaime, Never and I got up at 5:00 am to catch a 6:30 bus that never showed up. We were waiting with a bunch of other people and finally realized it wasn't coming. We eventually piled in a van. The biggest guy had to cram in the back with the backpacks. We made it to the bus station in San Jose and got a bus to the Frontera. Our first stop was in a little town the beautiful Somoto Canyon that we never got to see. We were running out of money and I went to an ATM to get cash. It kept saying thanks for the transaction, but didn't spit any money out of it. Eventually we figured out it was taking money out of my account each time. We didn't have enough cash to get another night at the hotel, which was OK because the people who owned it were tripping on my tattoos and being rude anyway. We used the last money we had to get a bus to the next town and I went searching for an ATM. It worked out. We caught another bus and then a ferry to Ometepe. It's an island on Lake Nicaragua. Jaime found a hotel near the ferry terminal that had hot water. That was all she really wanted. We had taken so many cold showers, been lied to about so much, when we checked into rooms we went straight to the faucet. People will say anything before you get to the hotel figuring once you're checked in you'll just suck it up and deal with anything. Jaime wanted hot water and she got it. The place was owned by a German and American Couple. They were really cool. They made us an American style breakfast and insisted we flush the toilet paper. She had the septic system built to American standards and thought it was filthy to leave used paper in the wastebasket. At this place my staff infection started kicking into high gear. I was tired, a bit disoriented and my arm started to swell up. I was really feeling weird when the building started to shake. I was brushing my teeth and thought I was just sick. Then the toilet water started to splash out of the toilet. I went out of our room and Never was trying to walk to me, but the world was moving and he looked like he was drunk, wobbling all over the sidewalk. The earthquake lasted for about a minute. It turned out there was a big one right off the coast of Costa Rica. A few days later a volcano erupted.

From there we went to a hotel on the shore of the lake. We were the only ones there and had our own restaurant and bar. We held out there for a while. We need some time to chill out and had about a week to kill before we flew to Ecuador. It was so tranquil you could relax. After two months, a

bunch of borders and buses we were tired. With a three month job in the jungle coming up, the break was well deserved. I made friends with some indigenous family that lived nearby and the girls loved Never. The mom asked us to leave him there. The father was working on the craziest little canoe. It was in bad shape. He was using grain sacks and some sort of tar to fill in the cracks. It seemed pretty pointless to me, but I supposed he needed a boat and didn't have anything else to do. Never got to play with a native boy, who was stoked to play with modern toys. We had been at the beach a week before and like a jackass I picked the wrong wave. It ended up being a huge waste of time and money. The waves were just plain bad. There was a swell, but the sandbar was not lined up right. The beaches were beautiful and there were lightning storms in the distance every night. By the time we found the good waves I was sick and burned out on the wave greedy tourists. I sold my board and we left the beach behind. I didn't go back to the ocean until Peru, four months later. Ometepe was perfect for us to hang out being a family before our three month stay in Ecuador.

After Ometepe we went to Granada. This punker American guy met us at the bus and helped us get to the hostel he worked at. His name is Gallo. The hostile was called Chili's. It is a Mexican themed party hostel. Jaime had no desire to stay there so Gallo took them a few blocks away to a calmer place. I stayed at Chili's, met a guy named Kevin and ended up hanging with him for the night. One of the waitresses was flirting with me and smacked my ass gently. I thought it was game on and posted up in the game room. When she walked by I gave her a proper smack on the ass. It turned out her boss was right behind her. Then she started crying. The real downer was that she was the other owner's girlfriend. I was talking to the owner that saw me smack her ass and volunteered to leave. He said that was a good idea, then changed his mind. The girl claimed she didn't do anything to instigate the situation and I said I must have been mistaken. I had become the asshole and it was really uncomfortable. They were supposed to have a BBQ the next day and I had signed up for it. The super-hot Swedish bartender was all over me. I figure she was into spanking… I had to go back to check it out.

I told her I would be back for the party. She said she would be waiting for me. Later it started raining and I went back to see if the BBQ was still happening and I got a rough welcome, they said "No, it's fucking raining." Ok then, that was the end of my stay in Chili's. I went to a bar near to Jaime's hostel, made some friends and got drunk all over town trying to get underage girls into discos. Eventually we went our separate ways, but

I did get a decent video of the kids while we were partying at the local dive bar. I have seen some gross bathrooms. This one was as bad as it got. The plaster walls were crumbling, the toilet was gross and most people didn't bother to piss in it. The floor was a pool of urine and it was soaking up the walls. I was dry heaving as soon as I walked in. I did my best at long distance pissing. I gave myself a B.

Before we left Granada I went to see a doctor about my arm infection. He told me it was just from the stress of traveling. That dude was zero help and I continued to get worse after that. We flew to Quito where we had a few days and I found a clinic. The morning doctor told me there was a doctor that spoke English there in the afternoons and I should come back then. The guy ran a battery of blood tests and figured out my staff infection had one antibiotic that would cure it. He also told me I had super high cholesterol. I told him it was from all the fried food in Central America. Of course Jaime said it was from smoking. I went to the reserve with Jaime and Never, and kept getting worse, so I headed back to Quito. The doctor saw my arm and said "Abcesso." I needed a hospital, he pointed one out and I went. I eventually got the abscess drained and my life returned to normal, more or less. Whatever passed for normal in any case.

If your idea of normal is walking miles of trails in a cloud forest, I envy you. After three months I knew the reserve intimately. I was doing a creek crawl up the Eastern property line. All the property lines were water. Both sides had beautiful waterfalls and the Rio Mindo lapped at the shore. I had to dive in a pool on the Eastern creek for a valve I lost for the water system. I was surprised to see the long whiskered catfish common to American fish tanks. I didn't know there are armadillos in the jungle. Furthermore, I didn't know they could jump a two foot wall. They would raid the garden regularly. The only thing I found they wouldn't eat was potatoes. I expected tons of crazy bugs and stuff... but poisonous caterpillars? The hummingbirds were awesome, but after months they are just background. How crazy is that? There were 15 species of hummingbirds on a regular basis buzzing all over the place. I had to rescue at least a dozen that had gotten into the cabin. You can't help but learn about them. I made jungle tamales at the reserve. Pork was cheap when we were there and we had a black bean version. They were perfect for jungle expeditions. I used banana leaves that traveled well.

Nev and I would take off on the trails to build steps. It was the only time I could watch him. When you have a three hundred pound Jaguar roaming around, you can't slip. I don't think a day went by when I could say

I was sure something wasn't watching me. It was completely amazing. Jaime, Never and I got to live in a cloud forest, in Ecuador. It was some shit right out of Swiss Family Robinson. I am proud that I got to share that with them. It is easily my most cherished time of my life.

Some of the funnier things were talking to and dealing with toothless cowboys, eating at Gladis' Bar BQ and the plaza hippies. We were dependent on the toothless cowboys to haul in anything heavy. I once sat for forty five minutes trying to figure out the guy was trying to tell me we were over charged. It took me five more minutes to realize his worker had skimmed ten bucks off the top. Ecuador uses dollars. After three months Gladis' and her family were nothing but loving to us. She was always generous with food for us. I was known as De Papa de Never. The plaza hippies were Spanish versions of the ones you find in Arcata. They didn't live near as well, but they could score some weed every so often. We did have an awesome birthday party with them and I wish they had some sort of contact information. The town of Mindo treated us well enough. When one of the cowboys stole our propane tanks, the cops and locals tried to help us out. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

4/2/13 San Salvador International Airport 3:00 pm

So I have a five hour layover, a bunch of Peso's and no way to change them for dollars. El Salvador uses dollars. I would love a cold beer, but am having a hard time using my only usable money for it. I had a moldy five dollar bill that no one would take in Ecuador. I bought a shitty pen for a dollar so I could add this to my journal entry. My faithful IPod is failing me. For the first time in two years it won't unlock. I lost the cord to charge it and just need it to check my email to get Kay's address and phone number. She is supposed to put me up tonight in San Francisco. I get in after midnight. I slept the first two legs of the trip back. I was so drunk at 1am I considered staying awake. I gave my Jameson flask to Gaia, a really pretty sweat heart from the Netherlands. Thanks to the gang last night that helped me plow through the last bottle of rum. I also got to hang out with Harri again. I saw a Facebook post saying he was in Santiago. We hung out had some beers and he offered to let me crash at his apartment. I decided I liked the party hostel and invited him to come check it out. Once again we got wasted. The last thing I remembered was stumbling outside looking for a cab to get him home.

It was really fun hanging with people from all over the planet. I wish I could have hung out with Gaia more. The first time I saw her I was struck with her beauty. I just looked at her and told her so. She just looked back speechless. She was one of the first people I met at the hostel, so it was easy to invite her in to the fold. It was a mix of people from all over the world. Rollen was spending her Chilean pesos before she went back to Argentina and that got the party rolling… pun intended. I know Gaia was at my left most of the night. She was the last face I remember that night. More importantly she was the first to drink off the flask that night. I remember looking into her eyes and she held out her hand. From what I remember it was a fun night. All the guys were staring at her. She wasn't mine, but she was by my side. It's the little moments in life that fulfill us. At the end of the night she reminded me I had a plane to catch and a boy to see. She was looking at the faded Spiderman stickers Nev put on it. So many souls have shared that flask with me. I was compelled to offer it to her. The look in her eyes when I offered it… let's say I am a fan. Hopefully someday we'll run into each other and we can drink out of it again. My four month drunken marathon is at an end and my body needs a break. Too many cigarettes, way too much booze and I am looking forward to just enjoying a few beers with the boys.

I decided to give up cigarettes at least for now. It's funny sort of that I am back where I got sick at the end of this trip. I am sick today too. I am an alcoholic. It's the only illness that people call you an asshole about. I am hoping the money changer will be open when we get to San Francisco. Or I am fucked. The shuttle to Kay's is seventeen dollars. I have more than a hundred dollars' worth of Chilean Pesos. I could have changed in Santiago, but thought I would get something to eat or some coffee. Not sure how I am gonna get a hold of anyone. My IPod quit unlocking toward the end of the last night in Santiago. With my IPod out of commission I am pretty screwed. This has been a hell of a journey. It's not just over when I get to the States. In fact, it's the beginning of a new one. I get to see my boy. I don't have a car or any money to get one. I will hitchhike to Sac to see Never for a few days, retrieve my new bank card, sign divorce papers and try to get this book edited by the end of summer.

With a little luck and some help form my friends I am realizing my dream of being an author. I got Chile off my bucket list. It's definitely a place I could make a living. It's just too far from my boy. I just want to find a cool girlfriend, get back to whatever passes for normal life and sober up for a bit. Then when I do the book tour…hopefully I will see you there.

**Afterword:**

My life has sorted out for the most part. I got a job for the summer, hung out with my boy, then moved to Sacramento. I have him roughly half of the time. We like to take the Amtrak to visit family and friends. Jaime came around and I must apologize for freaking out. We are friends raising a kid. Sobriety eludes me, but I have cut down a lot. It is so interesting meeting the people I've hung out with. Usually it is a bit awkward at first, no one knows what to think about me. Then after a few stories they are all on board for the book and maybe some rum. The experience of partying with a guy that wrote a book is interesting, but it makes it more personal. I am leaning toward selling the book on my own, in bookstores, on street corners, and on college campuses. I want to personally thank people for buying my book. I have no idea how this will all play out. But I did write the book and I will get it out one way or another. For the next bit of my life I am going to keep trying to sober up for a while, focus on being a father to my boy and trying to get my friends to go do some things with me. Anyone out there that has read this book, you are invited to interact with me, visit me, invite me, email or whatever. I will try to keep my life open and accessible. I would love to hear your opinions and share your stories.

If you get anything out of this I hope it is a desire to do what you dream about. I am saying the same thing others that speak the truth say. This is just the way my life unfolded while I was learning. I now know what my puzzle is… It's my son. Sure I want to get the pieces I am missing, travel, meet people and affect the world… but our children need our guidance and with some balance I can do both. They don't need us to be their friends. They must trust us enough, from experience, to listen to the lessons we try to teach. I want to get him up to speed with what I know as soon as possible. First, I think it could save him some trouble. Second, when he does realize where his life is taking him… he will be excited to unravel the mystery, not afraid. For all of our failings as humans, we are amazing. We live on an incredible planet and have access to see it all. If you're young, here is my advice. Learn a skill. Then you can hone that skill while volunteering anywhere in the world. If you can get somewhere, there is someone that will feed you and give you shelter for your help.

You could party your way around the planet, but that is unsustainable unless you have a wad of cash. Work where you have to, visit where you want to and party then. At the end of the day there is far more to do than to just party. Get off the gringo trail. Go to places out of the way, make local

friends and get to know the places you go. My thought is you need at least a month to get intimate with a place. Slow down, get more out of less and you will find the diamonds in the rough. There is nothing more human than a genuine heartfelt smile. Helping other people for a smile alone will always be worth it. Who knows? Maybe you'll be the one smiling.

# Index of reoccurring characters

In order of appearance

Jaime: My ex-wife and mother of my 2nd son
Dune: Neighbor at Lime Lake and childhood hero
Vicki: My dad's 1st girlfriend after my mom, mother of my sister and brother
Bean: Vicki's son, considered my brother
Sasquatch: My dad's nickname. Not to be confused with the girl in the Sasquatch mating ritual
Kat: Kathy, Dad's 2nd wife, my 2nd mom and good friend
Never: my son
Danny: AKA Big Danny. Kat's first husband, psychopath
Matt: My sister-in-law, Anne's youngest brother, lifelong adventure buddy
Mario: Owner of Katuwira in Peru
John: Kat's oldest son, my older step-brother
Biscuit: Don, Younger step-brother
Grandpa Johnny: My father's father. Beatnik drifter
Robbie: best friend in Eastern Washington
Keith: Asshole oldest brother, Singer in Faultline, owner of Quakes
Chato: Worked for Mario in Peru
Joker: Childhood friend, Shock Trauma, Baja
Bob: AKA BBB or triple B, boarder at my mom's during high school
Candy: Girlfriend after high school, Daughter of Wizard
Wizard: Dad's biker buddy, lived on Mt. Rainer
Convict: Dad's prison buddy, 1st roommate
Nick: High school running partner, not to be confused with Ali's son
Ali: Mother of my 1st child
Nick: Ali's 1st child
Rhonda: Ali's mom, coach in the art of destruction
Tony/Stone: Best friend, tattoo artist
Little Danny: Son of Big Danny, Candy's Boyfriend, half-brother of my step-brothers
Baby/Dan: My youngest brother
Little Tony: Ali's brother
Hogg: Middle brother on my mom's side
Charlie: roommate at apartment, climbing buddy, Jaime's ex
Lisa: Stone's wife

Waggy: Hippie jackass, Jaime's friend
Albino: Friend since Jr. High
Burt: Adopted by the drunk punks, climber, lived at apartment
Luke: Freshwater surfer, Baja
Deerbone: Managed apartments, camper-mate, travel-mate and hot spring buddy
Dave: Friend's with Burt, climber, party friend
Duane: climbing hippie
Gary: Boss in Humboldt, good friend
Andrew: Rave organizer, first mountain partner
Anne: Keith's first wife, Matt's sister
Tweeker Matt: Meth-head, asshole, crashed apartment parties
Tobias: Hot spring buddy, Baja
Toledo: My wolf dog in Desert
Viella: Owner of hostel and cabin in Chile
Gonzo: 1st friend in Humboldt, Jaime's roommate, surfer, Baja
Teague: Surf buddy in Humboldt
Sioux Dog: Desert hillbilly, Brother of Christopher
JYB: Junkyard Bryan, childhood friend, Shock Trauma, Hawaii
Tractor Bob: AKA Naked Bob, Shock Trauma, Horse dong
Buddy: AKA Butch, Richard, Maggie, Shock Trauma
Pawling: Shock Trauma, Hawaii
Cindy: Dad's 3rd wife
Pinche Paul: Surf buddy in Humboldt, Baja
Red: High school friend, roommate in Humboldt, surf buddy, Baja
Dennis: JYB's brother, Keebler elf, Hawaii, Asswipe

Life is a curious thing. Puzzle pieces come in all shapes and sizes. My mission is to find the pieces I'm missing. How do we squeeze every drop out of this life? That is the puzzle. When you find yourself in love with life, there are only words. This is my story. I love stories. I also love change, booze, LSD and traveling. You know the adage... you are where ever you find yourself. Well, I find myself in some rather humorous, sometimes tragic, situations. But you can't really judge that until years later. How did it turn out in the end? I had enough to write a book with change. Read the book, then we can get to my stories.

"Carry on till you find what you need, without tha ill come back empty as yo

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Micah Ditton

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